

# STUDENT DRAMATICS

An Educational Magazine for Directors, Teachers, and Students of Dramatic Arts

XXVII, No. 2

APRIL, 1956

Vol. XXVII, No. 2

## SHAKESPEARE FOR FUN

by EMILY RICHESON

## THE NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE IN THE UNITED STATES

by ARTHUR H. BALLETT

## THE GAY NINETIES

by CHARLES R. TRUMBO

## DIRECTING THE MUSICAL COMEDY

by DELWIN B. DUSENBURY

## SIXTH NATIONAL DRAMATIC ARTS CONFERENCE

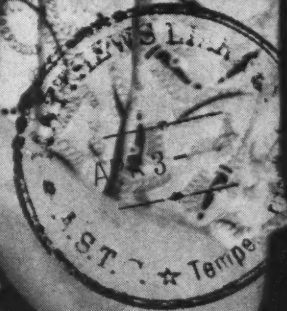
## REPORTS ON TWO "FIRSTS"

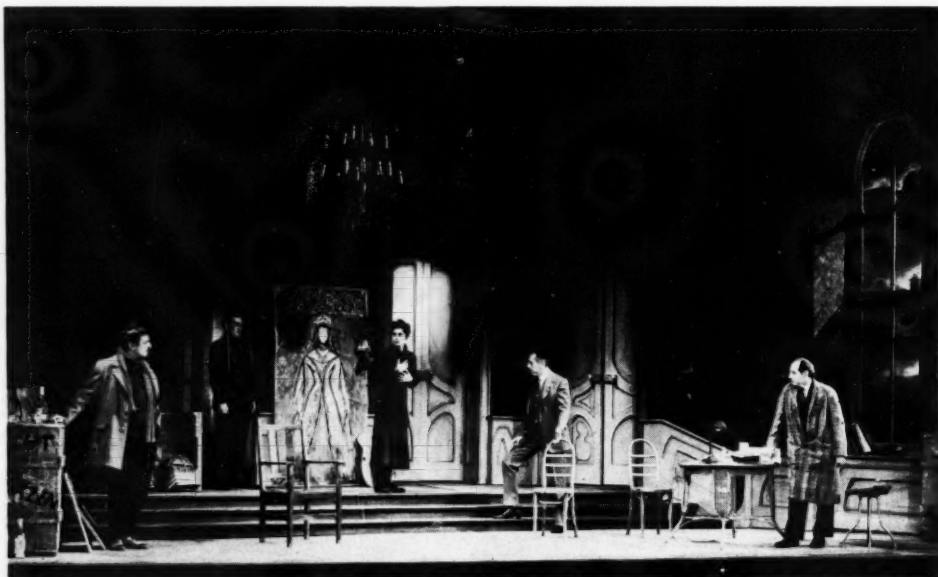
by FRIEDA E. REED

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associates. They spread abroad the story that, when the rest of the imperial family were massacred by the Reds, the youngest daughter, Anastasia, though severely injured, escaped with her life. The forlorn, confused, embittered amnesiac offers no resistance to their plans. The conspiracy prospers. Success is in sight. But then comes the great, the final test. The Imperial grandmother is alive. Her acceptance is essential. If they can win that, the rich prize is theirs.

*\*(In a scene of breathless suspense the two women, young and old, meet. One fumbles with half awakened memories; the other fights against the opening of old wounds, the giving of love that belongs to the dead to a clever imposter ... But slowly, inevitably, they find their way into each other's arms. It is a moment of gorgeous theatre.)*

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*\*This scene is published separately as a one-act play under the title "Recognition Scene From Anastasia," at 50 cents a copy. (Slightly restricted, royalty on application where available.)*

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# As I See It . . .

## WILL WISHING MAKE IT SO?

1. I wish in the commercial theatre the actors and actresses would *project* to us in the last rows of the theatre instead of only to those in the first five rows.
2. I wish the commercial theatres would become modernized with P.A. systems as are so many high school and university theatres.
3. I wish there were more movies like *The Trouble with Harry*.
4. I wish the commercial theatre would swing away from stark realism and Freudian plots, so horribly portrayed in *Tea and Sympathy*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, *Janus*, and *Bus Stop*.
5. I wish the commercial theatre would present more plays like *The Tea House of the August Moon*, *Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Lark*, *Inherit the Wind*, and *No Time for Sergeants*.
6. I wish prices for good seats in the commercial theatre would decrease to my pocket-book level, rather than to increase beyond my financial means.
7. I wish television would grow up.
8. I wish all family television plays would follow the true-to-life pattern of *Father Knows Best*.
9. I wish television westerns would be true to life, as I believe *Gun Smoke* is.
10. I wish spectaculars would not be so spectacular (Imogene Coca and Max Liebman were so right); that wide screens were not so wide!
11. I wish all variety shows followed the pattern of the *Ed Sullivan Show* and the *Perry Como Show*.
12. I wish school boards, school superintendents and principals would recognize the potentialities of the educational theatre.
13. I wish that I now had 1000 registrations for our Sixth National Dramatic Arts Conference.
14. I wish that the National Thespian Membership roll would reach 1700 by June 30.
15. I wish . . . . . I wonder . . . . .

## ASSIGNMENT FOR THE TEACHER

**S** EARCH for truth: All children should be free to seek truth wherever it can be found. Stimulate talent: The useful talents of all children, retarded, average and gifted, should be stimulated and developed. Guide the pupil: The schools must guide and counsel with every child in preparation for the world of work.

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This scene, from the production of *Fog Island* by Troupe 177, W. R. Boone High School, Orlando, Fla., won First Prize (\$50.) in the Character Division of the National Play Picture Contest sponsored by Row, Peterson & Company, Evanston, Ill. Congratulations to Troupe 177 and their sponsor, Mildred E. Murphy.

## BUT WHAT A JOB!

**D** ESPITE the many problems that plague public education, some 1,138,000 teachers (and other types of school personnel) provide instruction to 22,101,000 elementary and 8,472,000 secondary school pupils in the public schools of the United States.

## ECHOES FROM THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION

**H** IGHER prestige, better salaries, and freedom from noninstructional chores will help in recruiting and retaining good teachers. Use of teacher aides (one popular suggestion to meet the teacher shortage) requires more study before it can be recommended. To increase supply of future teachers, form more Future Teacher Clubs and intensify the guidance activity so as to encourage more youth to enter teacher-training institutions. Scholarships for teacher candidates will help too.

**T** HE Conference summed up its ideas in a list of some 12 public relations techniques and devices already in practice among school people. But the Conference reemphasized the importance of citizens' advisory committees. Other suggestions: make wide use of radio, television, the press; set up state fairs of student work and of their activities; organize statewide teacher recognition days. "Public relations should be an organized and planned part of every school program . . . In the final analysis, a fine-quality educational program through the radiance and enthusiasm of its teachers and pupils is its own best ambassador."

## EUROPE THIS SUMMER?

**D** R. William P. Halstead and his charming wife, Claribel Baird Halstead, Department of Speech, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, will head a drama and theatre tour this summer in the following European countries: England, France, Italy, Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Scotland. From the information sent me it's a tour worth considering if you are planning a summer in Europe. If you are interested, Dr. Halstead will mail to you detailed information.

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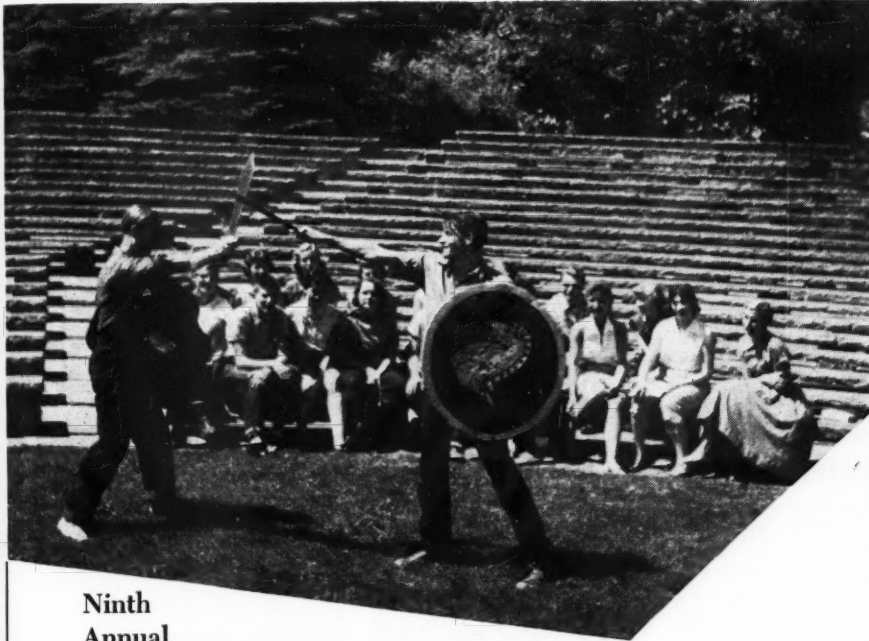
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## In this Issue

**A**FTER reading Emily Richeson's article, *Shakespeare for Fun*, our sponsors, I feel sure, will be further encouraged to do one of the Bard's plays before they paint the last scene, direct the last student actor, present the last play. All of us deep down in our hearts want to do Shakespeare; yet our fears of a successful production prove to be unsurmountable barriers. Mrs. Richeson had the same trepidations, but she leaped over them. You can do Shakespeare if you have the "will for it." By the way, Mrs. Richeson is our Regional Director for Kentucky and sponsor of Thespian Troupe 808, Tilghman High School, Paducah.

—O—

**T**HE GAY Nineties! What romance, what excitement as the new century approached! What costumes! Mr. Trumbo, in this month's article on costumes, takes us all back to our grandparents' days when they were "kings of all they surveyed." Even though I am not a betting man, I'll wager that the trunks in grandma's attic contain costumes similar to those discussed by Mr. Trumbo. Ask to try them on—you'll be amazed at their beauty. They will really do something for you!

—O—

**M**R. BALLETT discusses the present non-professional theatre in his article which continues his series on the history of the theatre. You will read of the growth of the little theatre movement during the 1920's; the importance of the educational theatre; and his challenge to the high school theatre, the so-called "grass-roots" of all theatre. Mr. Ballett will make you think twice before you make your final selection for your next play.

—O—

**H**AS YOUR school ever presented a good musical comedy; as, *Finian's Rainbow*, *The Student Prince*, *Showboat*? Dr. Dusenbury challenges you to consider a musical comedy production for one of your plays, let's say, next year. A successful presentation will be a soul-satisfying experience, not only for you and your dramatics department, but for all departments of your school, especially the music. Do you want to put up SRO signs? A noteworthy musical comedy will do just that.

—O—

**F**RIEDA REED, our editor of Theatre for Children, is certainly doing a commendable job for our magazine and our society. Sold as she is on Children's Theatre, she is slowly but surely selling this program to our member schools with her writing and editing. I too, like her, believe in theatre for children and hope that nearly all of our member schools will include in the not too distant future a play for children each year. It is not "kid stuff" to do a children's play!

—O—

**F**INALLY, You will find a pictorial page of the personnel of Indiana University, mostly from the Theatre, who will help us with our Sixth National Dramatic Arts Conference. You who have attended our other conferences will readily recognize most of them. The National Thespian Society is indeed grateful for their enthusiasm, helpful suggestions, and whole-hearted cooperation.

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(Western Area)
- ARKANSAS** ..... Arkansas State College, State College, Marie Thost Pierce, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 301, Marked Tree High School, April 21.
- PENNSYLVANIA** ..... Ambridge Sr. High School, John C. Barner, Sponsor, Troupe 1032; Jean E. Donahey, National Councilor and Sponsor, Troupe 187, Brownsville Sr. High School, April 21.  
(Western)
- FLORIDA** ..... Roosevelt Hotel, Jacksonville, Eunice Horne, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 914, Robert E. Lee High School; Speech Dept., University of Florida, Gainesville, Co-host, April 27, 28.
- OHIO** ..... Uhrichville High School, Edythe Brown, Sponsor, Troupe 1281, Program Chairman; Florence Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, October 13.  
(Southeastern)
- OHIO** ..... Middletown High School, Florence Powell, Sponsor, Troupe 918, Program Chairman; Florence Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, October 13.  
(Southwestern)
- OHIO** ..... Ursuline High School, Youngstown, Sister Rosemary, Sponsor, Troupe 1126, Chairman; Florence Hill, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, October 27.  
(Northeastern)
- OKLAHOMA** ..... Oklahoma City Central High School, Maybelle Conger, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 822, May 5.



\*Jeanne Halliburton, noted Hollywood actors' agent, one of scores of Hollywood talent scouts, casting directors, actors' agents who regularly cover Playhouse productions, chats backstage with Leonard Shoemaker, student in cast of Rudy Vallee show.

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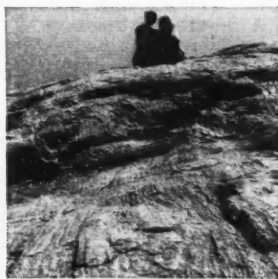
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A scene from *The Comedy of Errors*, Troupe 808, Tilghman High School, Paducah, Ky., Mrs. Henry A. Richeson, Sponsor.

**D**O YOU know a show you'd like to produce sometime? Of course you do. Every good director has a baker's dozen on mental file that he feels ought to be staged. Maybe you like that spine tingling melodrama in which the murderer, burdened with a hat box containing a former victim's head, is recognized not ten minutes after the first curtain. His next victim is equally obvious to the audience, but when he'll commit the crime and how holds one enthralled to the tag line. Perhaps your favorite is the charming fantasy that says love is stronger than death; or the hilarious farce in which a retired and prosperous gangster finds his home all gummed up with the corpses of a rival gang; or the delightful satire of the vituperative dinner guest; or the gay, heart warming story of the gal who had a way with a gun and a man. These are from my list of plays that I consider

sometime musts. Add yours and we'd probably have a fair sized catalogue.

But suddenly that delightful, undemanding sometime is "one with yesterday's ten thousand years"; the date of your next production is a few months away. You must pin down your selection of favorites to the one play that is right for now. The ivory tower director whose only interest is in the intrinsic worth of the play must give way to the busy high school teacher with obligation to fit choice of play to the limitations of physical equipment, time and actors available, and to his desire to serve the best interests of his students. And so you check your list. Does the melodrama, thrilling as it is, conform to your credo that a suitable secondary school play must affirm life? And anyway the cast is small. That one consideration eliminates many fine plays. Too many wonderful young people are hungry for



Members of Tilghman's Make-up club (Troupe 808) preparing players for a Shakespearean production.

## SHAKESPEARE for FUN

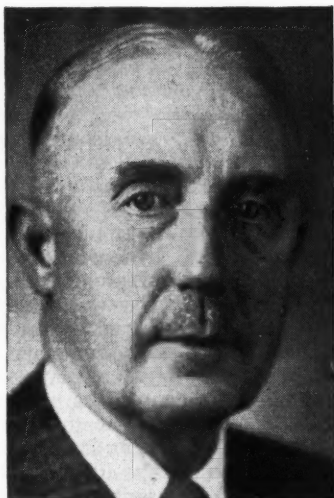
by EMILY RICHESON

the experience acting offers. There's the boy who has worked faithfully backstage two years. He really has no talent for the theatre except the one all important talent that he loves it. There's the timid girl nobody ever noticed until she fashioned lovely costumes for last spring's production. Each would be happy to carry a spear or a mop behind the footlights. Let's give them the chance. And so back to your list of plays. That tale of a gal and her guns—now there's a big cast for you. But what about staging? Perhaps you don't feel at home with sets in the traditional Japanese manner, in which the change of one symbolic stage piece means a change of time or place. The mere thought of a side show, a train, a ship's deck all in one play makes you lay that one aside. What about the dinner guest? Is there a male actor among your students who can carry almost the entire weight of a three-act play? Also, the play is modern dress; you've had a long run of those and you'd like a change. On to the next title. Fine as your kids are, can you entrust or burden them with the interpretation of so ethereal a theme? Will Death project as the prototype of humanity endlessly seeking an answer to the riddle of life? Will your play clearly convey the classical comedy ending, or will your audience mistake the earthly lover for the protagonist and be unhappy when the heroine walks with Death into the Beyond?

At this point you are becoming slightly desperate. You return your list of favorites to its secret file and read away several years of eyesight in the library anthologies and then order a few dozen new plays only later to add them to the already bulging collection of contemporary plays you have read and laid aside. Perhaps you are an efficient individual who has found a way to eliminate this perennial, agonizing period of play selection; but if you aren't, let me recommend to you my last season's solution to my recurrent question of what play shall I do now. I found an eminently satisfactory answer in Shakespeare's immortal slapstick *Comedy of Errors*. The cast is large and flexible, the humor timeless and sure-fire; there is ample opportunity for glamorous costuming and a beautiful, yet reasonably easy, setting. Also there is undeniable satisfaction and prestige for you, your cast and your school in successfully staging a Shakespearean production.

(Continued on page 30)



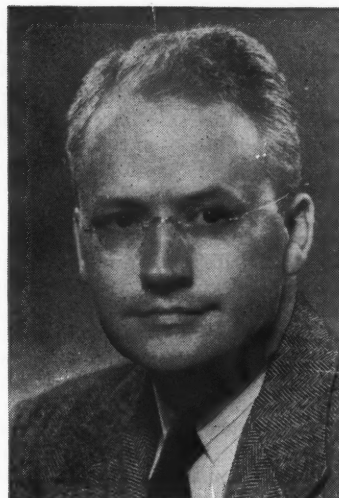


Dr. Lee Norvelle, Director of the Indiana University Theatre, Host and Co-chairman of conference program.

## SIXTH NATIONAL DRAMATIC ARTS CONFERENCE

JUNE 18-23, 1956

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
BLOOMINGTON



W. Norris Wentworth, Chairman, Conference Bureau.

**H**ERE pictured are seven reasons why we can again look forward to another successful National Dramatic Arts Conference at Indiana University this June. To many of you this page will be merely a renewal of old acquaintances; to others, an introduction to the men of IU who will help your National Council execute another successful conference program.

Dr. Norvelle is a most gracious host, a most cooperative co-chairman of the conference planning committee. Mr. Scammon, Mr. Dorst and Mr. Gaiser will solve for you all your problems of staging and lighting. Mr. Smith will set up superb displays of your productions in the beautiful foyer of the University Theatre Building. Mr. Kinzer will arrange for "live" radio broadcasts and TV programs. Finally, Mr. Wentworth will complete all details concerning workshops, housing and other requested services.

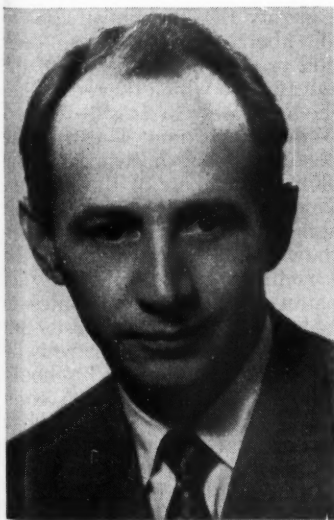
Planning a full week's conference is a challenging assignment for the general chairman. Its successful operation throughout the week, however, depends upon many persons from the student ushers to the university administration. The National Thespian Society is grateful for the wholehearted cooperation so graciously extended by all the personnel of Indiana University.



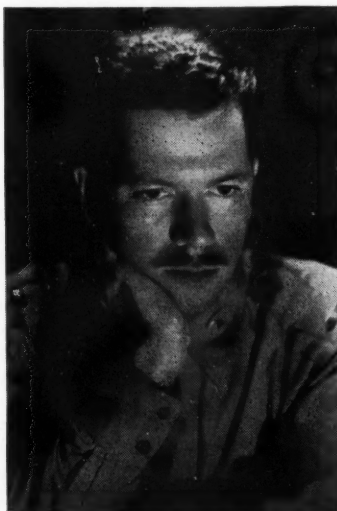
Gary Gaiser, Simplified Lighting and Modern Secondary School Stages Workshops.



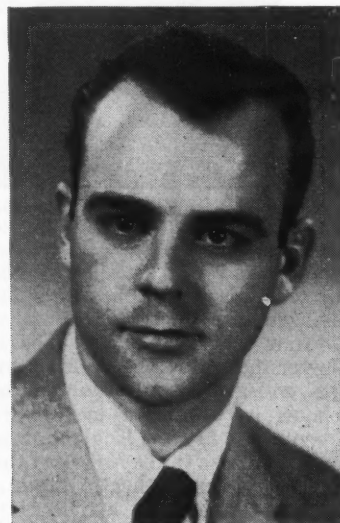
Vergil Smith, Chairman of Exhibits.



William E. Kinzer, Radio and TV "live" programs and Workshop.



Richard L. Scammon, Chairman of Stage Property committee, Simplified Staging and Modern Secondary School Stages Workshops.



Ken Dorst, Co-chairman of Stage Property committee, Simplified Staging and Modern Secondary School Stages Workshops.

EVER since man has congregated together with his fellow man, he has communicated ideas, experiences, and emotions in order to make community life possible. Certainly one of the earliest and most effective means of communication was through pantomime. As the symbolism grew complex and definitive, song, speech, dance, and the combination of all of these, the drama, was born. Such communication, once it was no longer necessitated by urgent and immediate needs, became a form of art. It became a stimulus to action, either physical or mental, intellectual or emotional. Specialists took over, and it became professional.

But the long history of the art of the theatre repeatedly shows that the essential urge or stimulus to dramatize is within all of us. Little children at "play," adults in their waking dream worlds, the games we play, and the very personalities we exhibit are all part of the life of the stage on which each of us "has his hour." For truly, "all the world's the stage, and all the men and women merely players." The great bulk of formal theatrical activity today in America is not centered in New York or Hollywood, nor is it the exclusive property of those men and women who have professionally trained or prepared themselves to earn a living in the theatre. It is now, as it always has been, the activity of men and

HISTORY OF THEATRE

## THE NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE in the UNITED STATES

by ARTHUR H. BALLETT

elsewhere, but they devote their spare hours to bringing living theatre to their communities.

The most professional of the non-professional theatres in this country is probably the largest of the little theatre groups. Some of them are far from "little" theatres, however; they are really big businesses servicing wide areas with stage drama. The little theatre movement grew to the proportions of a national craze in the 1920's when there was hardly a crossroads in America that did not sport an "opera house" or a tent show of some kind. Local repertory of various degrees of excellence poured theatre across the country.

The advent of radio and the motion picture soon cut off the blossoming movement, but the mightiest of these groups survive today as leading American theatres. The Provincetown Players, for example, became the powerful Theatre Guild of New York. The Cleveland Play House is an imposing structure housing a vibrant and active community theatre second to none in the country. In Dallas, the late energetic and talented woman

well into its twenty-seventh year of production.

These theatrical groups—and only an outstanding few have been mentioned—do not, however, represent the bulk of community theatre work in this country. The majority are small groups scattered all over the country producing more or less regularly a series of plays each year with home-grown talent and with or without a trained director. One need only attend, as the author recently was privileged to do, the Idea Theatre Conference in Wisconsin to realize how busy and alive the theatre is throughout the country. Tiny hamlets tucked far away from theatrical centers nevertheless manage to produce two or three excellent plays each year, as well as conduct series of "play readings" and excursions. Some organize merely to do a single play, while others, like those as widely apart as in Jackson, Mississippi, and Reno, Nevada, have theatres of their own with a full season of productions.

In a sense, even less "professional" than the little theatres are those of the universities and colleges. Some great universities, quite obviously, operate on the very highest level of production, acting, and play selection. But they are in no sense "money making propositions." Dedicated to the training of young men and women, they produce plays as part of the curriculum. Some, like Northwestern University, U. C. L. A., and Carnegie Tech, are quite frankly professional training schools for "majors" who will move into the theatre as a profession. Others, like Yale University and Stanford, are dedicated to the training of professionals as well as to experimentation under their great academic staffs in playwrighting and production. Still others, ranging from the mighty Big Ten universities to the small liberal arts colleges, offer courses and produce plays as part of the liberal education to which they are dedicated. The immensely successful University of Wisconsin Union Theatre, the great paths in regional theatre paved by the Carolina Playmakers of the University of North Carolina, the Penthouse arena staging at the University of Washington, the magnificent splendor of the technical facilities at the University of Iowa theatre, and so on are tributes to educational theatre at its very best. But great American educational theatre is by no means limited to the "big" schools. Most of us who have lived in a community where there is a small college know what *can* be done by even the smallest. Superb acting, sensitive direction, as well as solid entertainment may be found in all corners of our land. There is no correlation between size or facilities

(Continued on page 29)



Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* as produced by Troupe 763, University of Minnesota High School, Minneapolis, Arthur H. Ballet, Sponsor.

women who join together for the sheer joy to be derived from an art as old as civilized man himself.

From the ivy-covered halls of Yale University to tiny one-building midwestern colleges, from campus-like high schools in California to the one-room schoolhouse in New England, from community theatre in the Yukon to the excellent experimental theatre group in San Francisco, theatrical activity is largely in the hands of non-professionals. For most of the people who make those thousands of theatres possible, the theatre is an avocation. They earn their livings

named Margo Jones founded, not too many years ago, a theatre-in-the-round which is one of the most exciting playhouses in the country, employing professional actors and encouraging embryonic playwrights, like Tennessee Williams, to write great new plays. In New Orleans, *Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre* is a long-lived, full-time community theatrical activity, while on the West Coast, the Pasadena Playhouse not only provides this California town with living theatre but serves as an outstanding theatre training ground for young actors. The Buffalo, New York, civic theatre is



**T**HE costumes of the Gay Nineties may roughly be taken from the year 1893 to 1907. Sports were becoming more popular, and women had a new freedom. Bicycle riding attained great popularity and the divided skirts and bloomers worn caused much criticism from conservative people.

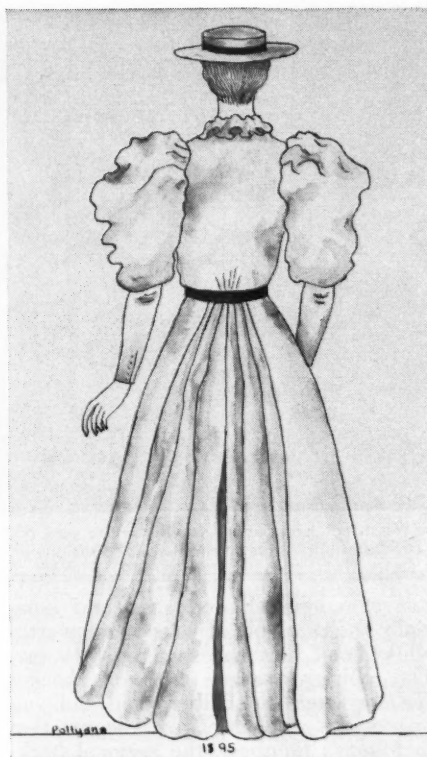
The bustle began to diminish in 1888. In 1889 it became insignificant, and in 1890 it had vanished altogether. Draping also disappeared, and the skirt now hung in wide pleats, neither gathered nor puffed, while the bodice remained long and cut to a point.

The ten years before, interest had been concentrated on the skirt while the bodice had received scant attention. However, in 1890 it was noticed that the sleeve no longer followed the line of the arm above the elbow but was being made to stand high at the shoulder. By 1891 the true "leg-of-mutton" sleeve had come in, and a period of keen interest in the sleeve arose.

For over a period of ten years skirts had been long enough barely to touch the ground, but when the bustle disappeared they grew longer, and by 1892 even the walking costume had its train.

At this same time new bodice and skirt shapes came in, and a new period in dress may be said to have begun.

In 1891 the skirt was narrow, smooth, and even at the hem, but in 1892 a short train appeared, and in 1893 it showed a tendency to become narrower about the hips and wider at the hem. This became the "bell skirt." It was joined to the bodice without gathers to the figure to emphasize an appearance of slenderness. The fullness necessary to give width and length was gathered at the



became more and more confined to the lower part of the skirt, the upper growing trimmer and tighter. It was as though hands were busy smoothing away another pleat, another gather or crease each year. The material saved in this manner appeared to be expended upon the train. Women of fashion had lived through a similar process from 1873 to 1878.

When the interest in the sleeve awoke



shaped, recalling the fashion of 1860, while others ended in two wide frills.

This was an epoch distinguished by great luxury. Silk was dominant without being always conspicuous. Its use was reserved for special occasions, and it was not worn in the street nor informally in the house. Dresses were made less and less of silk but were more and more lined with it, and it became almost exclusively the material for underskirts. In the 1880's a number of petticoats were worn at once, but when emphasis began to be placed on slenderness, they decreased in number, and finally only one was worn in order to preserve the slim effect about the hips. This one skirt, however, received almost as much care and attention as the outer skirt. The length of the skirt at this time forced the wearer to lift it as she walked in the streets, affording a view of the garment beneath. Therefore the loveliest materials, trimmings and embroideries were lavished upon it, and it was nearly always a more beautiful garment than the dress. It followed the cut of the dress except that it hung evenly and clear of the ground. It was smooth and close-fitting to the knee, then it flared out to quite a width. Since it was visible in many postures, reclining, sitting, dancing, etc., great attention was given to the hem which was designed to appear rich and unusual. The softer and fairer the flowering the more alluring the garment. One petticoat was described as being of heavy green patterned damask, spread at the knee into a wide flounce of green rep over which fell a second flounce of black lace dec-

(Continued on page 28)

FILLETS TO FLAPPERS

## THE GAY NINETIES

by CHARLES R. TRUMBO

back; or, if the train was to be of extraordinary length, the skirt was arranged in big box pleats. These pleats were often held down by stitching to the level of the knee, then falling in free folds. Occasionally skirts were to be seen with pleats pressed and stitched perfectly flat, these also falling free from the knee. In 1898 a modiste in Paris discovered the secret of making a skirt fit perfectly smooth and close above the waist and hips while keeping the required fullness and width at the hem. This effect was accomplished by the introduction of gores, triangular pieces of cloth, into the breadths forming the skirt. For several years the skirt was worn so that it trailed not only at the back but at the sides, and in 1902 had attained such a length that it almost had a train in front as well. For a short time at the beginning of the century over-skirts were introduced, only to disappear again without affecting the cut of the skirt. Fullness

in 1890, all that had to be done was to go back to past history and to ask the grandmothers of that generation what they had worn sixty years earlier. Every cut or design for the sleeve that appeared during the Gay Nineties had its counterpart in the previous "thirties." "Leg-of-mutton" sleeves rapidly became balloon-like and for a while the overarm was puffed so large as to look like a huge sack. During the following season double puffs were introduced, and the sleeve was hidden in a waterfall of flounces. Then in 1899 the smooth and narrow sleeve reappeared, cut very long with cuffs attached that almost covered up the hand.

About two years later fashion took the old puffed sleeve and reversed it. So in 1901, 1902 and 1903 women wore a sleeve narrow from the shoulder to the elbow but encasing the forearm into its own again. Many sleeves were bell-





**Finian's Rainbow** provides delightful theatrical experiences for the entire cast and the audience. In this production, directed by Dr. Dusenbury, note the individual positions of the chorus.

**A**LL TOO often, dramatic directors are confronted by eager students with the excited query, "Why don't we do a musical—like *Oklahoma* or *South Pacific*?" The director, in a state of exhaustion from the previous production, desperately tries to think of some answer which will not quench the enthusiasm of the students and at the same time prevent further requests of this type. So, the director points out that the extremely high royalty required for the non-professional performances of top-flight musical comedies and plays practically prohibits such productions by most educational theatre groups on a limited budget. Actually, the director is attempting to avoid the musical production because of the anticipated complexities of the production or possibly because the director feels somewhat inadequate in regard to the musical skills needed.

John Gassner has recognized the problem when he points out that musical shows are "less well ordered and organized, call for more compromises and team with more of what we call 'show business' than any other stage form." As the only custodian of the living theatre in most communities, the educational theatre must of necessity offer to its audience all types of theatre. Since the musical production is one of the most stimulating and entertaining forms of theatre, community theatre audiences should have an opportunity to see this vital form of theatre, not adapted to the motion picture or the television screen but in its original frame—the proscenium arch. Furthermore with such productions available as Kurt Weill's *Down in the Valley*, *Finian's Rainbow*, *Best Foot Forward*, *Knickerbocker Holiday* and the delightful satires of Gilbert and Sullivan—all at nominal cost—the director should have no difficulty in selecting a production that will fit in any theatre budget.

The same principles recommended for the selection of a play apply in the selec-

tion of a musical production and especially the principle of selecting a worthwhile book that has something to say. The political satire of *Knickerbocker Holiday* and the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, the problem of racial segregation in *Finian's Rainbow*, the regional background and the theme of tolerance in *Down in the Valley* and the Oriental insight of *Lute Song* recommend them for consideration. The innovation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein type of "musical play" in which the book and lyrics possess literary merit as well as entertainment value would indicate that the

#### ELEMENTS OF PLAY DIRECTING

## DIRECTING the MUSICAL COMEDY

by DELWIN B. DUSENBURY

trend today is toward a musical production in which the dialogue and drama are as important as the musical score.

In selecting the cast the dramatic director should never hesitate to ask for the assistance and the cooperation of the music department. Previously the dramatics director may have requested aid from the music department in furnishing background music or music between acts just as the manual arts division has been called on for the set, the home economics department for costumes and the art department for posters and other art work. In most instances, while these services had been of invaluable aid in the total production, the actual contributions had been given a minor emphasis. In the musical production all cooperating and contributing departments can share the spotlight with the dramatics director. Furthermore the very nature of the production itself tends to stimulate interest from the other aca-

demical divisions so that they enter into the project with the enthusiasm that is so necessary for a successful production. Colorful scenery and costumes, special dance numbers, and the large cast require a great deal of ingenuity and imagination on the part of all contributing divisions to insure an entertaining production.

One may point out too that with the over-crowded facilities in many schools, the musical production offers an excellent opportunity for the varied talents and abilities to be utilized in a single production. Actors, musicians, singers, painters, carpenters, dancers, electricians and costumers will find ample outlet for their abilities in the musical play.

Since such a variety of interests is represented, the question arises as to who will assume the over-all responsibility for the production. Since we are writing from the viewpoint of the dramatics director, it is natural for us to favor the director of dramatics. Actually the director of dramatics is responsible for the staging of the production or, in other words, all of the details pertaining to the theatrical aspects of the presentation—scenery, costuming, stage movement, and dramatic content. The musical director, on the other hand, is concerned with the selection of singing voices, the training of the chorus and the musical accompaniment whether it be a full orchestra or just an electric organ. From the beginning of the production, however, the musical director and the dramatics director must work closely together.

In casting the production the dramatic director must rely on the judgment of the musical director. A major criticism of the non-professional musical presentation is usually based on the inadequacies of the solo voices and the lack of spirit, intelligibility, and coordination of the singing chorus. While the acting ability of the prospective candidates for the cast is important, since the production is

primarily musical, emphasis must be placed on the singing voice. In casting, therefore, the dramatics director would do well to heed the judgment of the musical director. Even in *Knickerbocker Holiday*, which has many lengthy dramatic scenes written by one of America's foremost playwrights, Maxwell Anderson, the musical score by Kurt Weill is exceedingly complex and requires carefully trained singers to do it justice. From time to time, we find in the professional theatre, an actor who is not especially noted for his singing voice, carrying a production to success through the sheer force of his "showmanship" and theatre personality. Years of experience aided Walter Huston in his remarkable portrayal of Peter Stuyvesant in *Knickerbocker Holiday* and Gertrude Lawrence in *The King and I*. Neither could compete with an Alfred Drake or a Mary Martin as a singing actress. The educational theatre, however, does not offer the time to develop a Huston or a Lawrence. The first prerequisite then for considering an actor for a part in a musical production is the possession of an adequate singing voice. Furthermore, a dramatic director in the non-professional theatre should have a few techniques available for aiding and transforming the inexperienced actor into a somewhat convincing dramatic actor.

The arrangement of the rehearsal schedule requires much more organization than the straight three-act play. Ample opportunity must be allowed for

speaking parts; Thursday — Chorus; and Friday — Coordination of Principals, Chorus and Dialogue. In addition to this schedule individual solos and short dramatic scenes should be rehearsed whenever and wherever possible. Singing rehearsals can often be tiring and ample opportunity should be allowed for the relaxation of the voice. Due to the variety of units involved in a musical production — actors, singers, dancers, technicians, and accompanists — the director should plan his schedule so that no one group will be fatigued. Actually this variety of rehearsal units tends to break the monotony of the rehearsal schedule and hold the interest and enthusiasm of the cast.

Whether rehearsing principals or chorus, however, emphasis must be placed on the dramatic meaning of the lyrics and the contribution each musical number makes to the dramatic continuity of the production. In the preliminary stages of rehearsal I have had the principals and the chorus walk through each scene speaking both the dialogue and the lyrics. Too often, the musical production may sound as if it had been written in a foreign tongue due to the poor articulation and lack of dramatic intelligibility of the chorus and soloists. A speaking rehearsal calls the attention of the cast to the dramatic significance of the lyrics — an essential prerequisite for a successful musical play.

The basic mood of each musical number should be discussed with the soloists

walk, posture and specific business. Definite chronological ages may be assigned to each member of the chorus, and where the book and time permit, care should be taken in individualizing the costumes so that he or she may feel a specific identity. The chorus is the adhesive agent of the production, and careful attention and training of it are absolutely necessary for a successful production.

A word of caution should be advanced to the director who is accustomed to freely editing the script in order to meet the requirements of a particular cast or administration. While lines of dialogue can be eliminated readily, any editing of the lyrics which will involve the score must be done in consultation with the musical director. Revisions of this type usually affect a change in key or tempo or the overall musical development of the score, and the musical director may not agree with the alterations from a musical viewpoint. In these instances, a compromise revision can be arranged.

The use of a tape recording of the score as a substitute for a live accompaniment often facilitates the problem of rehearsal space since the only requirement is a room with an electrical outlet. While it would be advantageous to have a live accompaniment at all times, directors will find that the tape recording is an expedient and fairly flexible substitute.

I have one final suggestion for the director who is accustomed to the straight



The arrival of Peter Stuyvesant in New Amsterdam in *Knickerbocker Holiday* as presented at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Note the grouping of the Town Council in the center, with the Dutch Maidens and Soldiers at right and left stage.

the rehearsal of the singing chorus, and since the principal soloists are required to sing with the chorus due to the script, no other rehearsals can be planned at that time. After carefully dividing the production into scene units, a suggested weekly schedule may read: Monday — Chorus; Tuesday and Wednesday — All

and the chorus and it should be indicated through the actor's facial expression and general body position. In other words, the musical actor must be aware of his dramatic function in the production from the very first rehearsal. Each member of the chorus must be made to feel that he is an individual with a characteristic

play and now finds himself faced with the problem of moving groups of actors comprising the singing chorus instead of individuals. Usually the setting of a musical production calls for comparatively few units of stage furniture so that the director may use the units of the

(Continued on page 27)





Many Moons, Troupe 433, Eldora, Iowa, High School, Walter J. Zender, Sponsor.

### REPORTS ON TWO "FIRSTS"

**A**DVENTURING with the untried is always challenging, and when the results are satisfying, the rewards to the explorers are doubly stimulating. The adventurers reporting in this article are Troupe 433, Eldora High School, Eldora, Iowa; and Troupe 983, Morris Community High School, Morris, Illinois. The Iowa Troupe is basking in the success of their first Children's Play, and the Illinois Troupe boasts the premiere high school performance of a new play.

#### Eldora, Iowa, Troupe 433 Rejuvenates Interest in High School Dramatics with Children's Play

Walter J. Zender, Sponsor of Troupe 433, quotes his high school superintendent as saying, "I never thought you would be able to sell the students this type of play." According to Mr. Zender, "This appreciative admission aptly summarizes the doubt that plagued me many times during rehearsals for our production of Chorpenning's version of James Thurber's *Many Moons*. However, comments such as this and many other enthusiastic remarks of our audiences seemed to dissolve the memory of the problems and doubts that had recently been so formidable."

Mr. Zender continues, "To the best of our knowledge, this was the first Children's Theatre presentation within the immediate area of this county-seat town, a center around which eight smaller towns are clustered. Ours was frankly an experiment, and as far as the community was concerned, an experiment with the unknown; it was a challenge which provided the advantage of novelty and the disadvantage of the unfamiliar. Fortunately, we accepted the challenge!

"A combination of several situations motivated our attempt with this type of production. This is my first year of teaching, and I was informed by faculty and students alike that the community

attitude toward the high school productions was one of apathy. Besides, the principal of the elementary school heatedly stated that she felt that her students had been victimized in the past by paying admission to plays which they were unable to understand, and she was unwilling to accede to this injustice any longer. This perplexing combination of problems cried for a divergence from



past procedures, and Children's Theatre seemed to suggest a solution. If we could produce a play with appeal for both children and adults, then we believed that we might improve relations with the elementary school, win the approval of adults, and capitalize on the advertising power of the enthusiastic child. *Many Moons* proved to be that play.

"It would be unrealistic to report that there were not many difficulties involved. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to this endeavor was the maddening and elusive matter of mental attitude: of the cast, directly; and of the entire school, indirectly. Throughout the first weeks of rehearsal, the cast evidenced only grudging co-operation. Comments filtered through *sotto voce*, ranging from 'I don't think this is very funny' to 'This is plain kid's stuff.' The cast was being virtually intimidated by some of their fellow students; they were being made to feel guilty of being demoted mentally to the level of grade school. These reactions were very depressing, and I found it difficult to remember that after all it was

only a natural psychological response of teenagers to their first contact with Children's Theatre.

"Keeping in mind these attitudes, I found it doubly rewarding to observe the changed feelings of cast by the time of final performance. While most of the cast had begun to enjoy the show by production time, their diffidence rapidly changed to surprise and gratification when they discovered how much their audiences enjoyed their show, and that instead of losing stature as actors they really increased it. Where there had been doubt before there were assurance and warmth now. Here were ten people who had learned that the innocence, wonder, and magic of children and children's literature did not belong to a phase to outgrow but one to retain and cultivate. Here was an experience that was not childish but child-like—one filled with values and satisfaction. The comments now from cast were such as these: 'Really fun,' 'I certainly enjoyed it,' and 'Hey, I got a laugh on that line!'

"Whether it was curiosity, interest, loyalty, or parenthood that drew the audience of adults to our production, their reception indicated that they were delighted. Comments ranged from that of our principal: 'They seemed to enjoy doing it as much as I enjoyed watching it' to 'Wonderful show' to such superlatives as 'Best high school play I've ever seen.' Perhaps no director is ever fully satisfied with a production; indeed, there were many things in this one which, for me, were not accomplished. Nevertheless, the audience response was most encouraging.

"Not all of our problems were as nebulous as that of mental attitudes. As is the case with most small schools, we must work with limited facilities and a low budget; consequently, the matter of creating effective sets and costumes with a minimum of expense was a very basic problem. Our stage has a proscenium opening of twenty-three feet, with a depth of thirteen feet, and absolutely no offstage space, and no cyclorama. To compensate for these handicaps I designed a portal set to try to combine variety with simplicity for three changes of scene, and made full use of the apron. We had a total of eight entrances with which to work in re-arranging plugs, curtains, and doorways to provide for a room in the palace, the throne room, and the princess' bedroom. While the thrift necessitated by limited facilities requires patience and ingenuity, it does not sacrifice effectiveness, for Children's Theatre is at its best in the gaiety and charm that can be accomplished by an imaginative use of simple scenery.

"Costumes provided our biggest production problem. Without a scrap of costume stock, we costumed the play (in some cases with striking effect and in others merely with acceptability) for only thirteen dollars and seventy-five cents. Without the restrictions of period



## A SELECTED LIST OF RECOMMENDED PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

### MODERN PLAYS

Crazy Cricket Farm  
The Ghost of Mr. Penny  
Little Lee Bobo  
Mr. Popper's Penguins  
Mystery at the Old Fort  
The Panda and the Spy  
Seven Little Rebels

### HISTORICAL PLAYS

Arthur and the Magic Sword  
Buffalo Bill  
Daniel Boone  
The Indian Captive  
Marco Polo  
The Prince and the Pauper  
Young Hickory

### FAIRY-TALE PLAYS

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp  
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves  
Alice in Wonderland  
Cinderella  
The Elves and the Shoemaker  
Flibbertygibbet  
Jack and the Beanstalk  
King Midas and the Golden Touch  
The Land of the Dragon  
Little Red Riding Hood  
Peter Peter, Pumpkin Eater  
Pinocchio  
The Plain Princess  
Prince Fairyfoot  
Puss in Boots  
Rumpelstiltskin  
Simple Simon  
The Sleeping Beauty  
Snow White and Rose Red  
The Three Bears  
The Wonderful Tang

### PLAYS OF POPULAR STORIES

Five Little Peppers  
Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates  
Hansel and Gretel  
Heidi  
Hiawatha  
Huckleberry Finn  
Little Women  
Oliver Twist  
The Pied Piper of Hamelin  
Rip Van Winkle  
Robin Hood  
Robinson Crusoe  
The Sandalwood Box  
Tom Sawyer  
Treasure Island

*The plays listed above will be found fully described and illustrated in our catalogue*

## THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE PRESS

CLOVERLOT

ANCHORAGE, KENTUCKY

costumes, we were able to improvise satisfactorily. For example, The Royal Wizard appeared in what might be termed 'Variations on a Choir Robe,' and discarded sheets solicited from various sources and treated judiciously with dye, provided all other necessary mate-

rial for costume construction.

"Our experiment cannot be classed as a mere 'cultural success' either. While our profit (\$87.28) will not disturb Wall Street, the play was for us a financial success. We were limited to a matinee at which we played to approximately

400 elementary-school students, and one evening performance attended by 280 adults. Since these were the largest audiences in many seasons, we feel justly proud of our success.

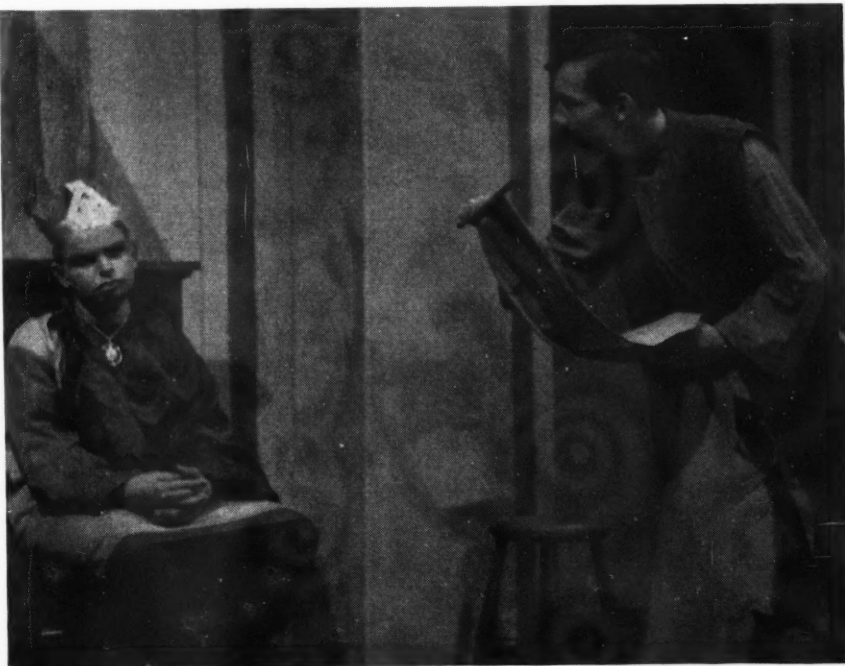
"Encouraged and excited by their success with *Many Moons*, our Thespians are working on an evening of one-acts composed of *The Marriage Proposal* (for which we are experimenting with an expressionistic set composed of two step-ladders, a see-saw, two straight chairs, and a table), a more conventional treatment of *The Boor*, and what we think must be one of the first presentations of the Recognition Scene from *Anastasia*.

"Certainly we have gained many values from our first experience with Children's Theatre in the production of *Many Moons*. Looking back over the difficulties, the frustrations, and finally the satisfactions, I find the vivid picture of the happiness and enjoyment in the children's faces a weighty argument for making our first attempt in Children's Theatre the beginning of a tradition in our school."

### Troupe 983 Presents Premiere of "The Twelve Dancing Princesses"

Last April Troupe 983, Morris, Illinois, under the direction of Sponsor Paul Beringer presented the premiere production of Helen Louise Hopping's play, *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*. Mr. Beringer says, "We chose this play be-

(Continued on page 27)



Another scene from Troupe 433's production of *Many Moons*.

# **T**HE CURIOUS SAVAGE

GRAMERCY GHOST

DARLING GIRL

A YOUNG LADY OF PROPERTY

**I REMEMBER MAMA**  
(High School Version)

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SORRY, WRONG NUMBER

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# MR. BARRY'S ETCHINGS



Comedy by Walter Bullock and Daniel Archer

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Judson Barry is an enthusiastic etcher, and as a pastime has made a marvelous imitation of a \$50 bill. The counterfeit — but he didn't like the word — was so perfect as to escape detection by everyone except the super-crook, "Fifty" Ferris, a woman who lives by passing counterfeits. Barry would never think of doing anything dishonest: it was as a joke that he gave one of his "masterpieces" to Bud, a boy friend. Barry's town has been in the hands of political jugglers, and it is in financial difficulties. The politicians have a strong political organization, and all the worthy causes, hospitals, etc., are suffering. Barry realizes that unless something is done, his town will soon be at the mercy of grafters. Out of the goodness of his heart, he distributes his counterfeit bills to the good causes in need of money, including a political campaign to drive out the crooks. At once the town responds and is on the way to recovery when "Fifty" Ferris, together with "Sawbuck" Sam, her sidekick, turns up, having got hold of the counterfeit Barry had given Bud. They make their way into Barry's home and propose a partnership whereby he shall supply the bills and they will circulate them. Barry is shocked, and gets them in his power

by suddenly turning on them a toy sub-machine gun which he has made for a little girl in the neighborhood. "Fifty" and "Sawbuck" are turned over to the police. However, this brings about the discovery that Barry has been circulating counterfeits. For the first time Barry realizes that what he has done, while not in his eyes ethically dishonest, is dangerous and anti-social. Detectives and reporters, who have come to Barry's town in order to write up the changes which Barry has brought about in his community, are sympathetic to him and try to intervene for a pardon. Barry rejects such a proposal but, meantime, a movie executive offers him a huge sum for the story of his life. The only condition on which Barry will accept is that the magnate give him the equivalent in good money of the counterfeits he has distributed, plus 10%. Barry will then offer for all counterfeits returned to him good money, plus a 10% bonus. So, all ends happily except for Barry's stipulation that whatever legal penalty may be imposed upon him he will cheerfully accept. As a matter of fact, he rather looks forward to a short jail term in peace and quiet.

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## BUT NOT GOODBYE

Stambaugh, Mich., High School

**SAM GRIGGS** is dead; after tying up the family property in a secret real estate deal, he suffers a heart attack. His spirit descends the stairs (looking as in life), but he cannot break through the mystic barrier to communicate with his family.

Benjamin Griggs, Sam's father, comes through the window to take Sam to eternity. They contrast strangely, for Sam is tall, gray, and aged; Benjamin is cocky, young, dapper, dark-haired. Benjamin departed this life in his thirties, having been hit over the head in a tavern brawl. Sam refuses to leave until his family has been provided for. Benjamin urges Sam to look beyond the fireplace, the ocean, and into eternity, to let earthly problems solve themselves. He fears Sam will become a ghost, a disembodied spirit. Tom Carter, Sam's partner, decides to keep the \$5000 real estate check due Amy Griggs. Sam, being unseen and having left his muscles upstairs, needs assistance to recover it.

When Benjamin hears his grandchildren, Jennifer and Jimmie, sacrificing their cherished ambitions—Jennifer to marry Professor Baker, Jimmy to build ships—to take care of their mother, he decides to help. He uses his influence with the weather to delay Carter's departure. Sam wills the presence of the minister. All their efforts having failed, Sam reluctantly agrees to leave. He bends over Amy, seated in his favorite chair fondling his unfinished ship model, and kisses her hair. What happens to Carter leaves the audience gasping with surprise and chuckling with amusement.

*But Not Goodbye* is a delightful play, a wholesome family story, intermingling love, sorrow, laughter, and suspense. Troupe 215 collected and made 1910 costumes, stippled scenery to suggest wall paper, used French doors, ladder back chairs, and an old fashioned cretonne covered settee. A student painted ship pictures and Benjamin's portrait. This play is also effective for Theatre-in-the-Round.

HELEN DUNHAM  
Sponsor, Troupe 215



*But Not Goodbye*, Troupe 215, Stambaugh, Mich., High School,  
Helen Dunham, Sponsor.



*The Crown of Thorns*, Troupe 101, Midwest City, Okla., Senior High School,  
Effie Carlisle, Sponsor.

## PLAYS OF THE MONTH

Edited By EARL BLANK

### THE CROWN OF THORNS

Midwest City, Okla., High School

**TROUPE 101** had a very pleasant assignment given them by the churches of their community. On Saturday night before Palm Sunday, our Thespians were to present an Easter play to introduce Holy Week. For this play the troupe chose *The Crown of Thorns*.

There was genuine satisfaction in presenting a play of this kind. The cast entered into the spirit of the play at once. They showed appreciation of the spiritual values that the play represents. Rarely does a teacher have the opportunity of witnessing such sincerity or earnestness of purpose at every rehearsal.

The girls who made the costumes for this production showed real skill in the assignment. They gathered materials from everywhere to dye, and jewels and ornaments to create the feeling of wealth for Pilate and his wife. As a result the costumes were beautiful and appropriate, but inexpensive.

The scenery committee built all the props and scenery for the play. With the aid of the art department, they painted scenery, built pillars, Pilate's chair, etc. With the added assistance of good lighting, the play was beautiful to look at. Easter music at intermission time and before and after the play sustained the reverent mood of the play.

If any school desires a good play representing the Crucifixion, this one will meet every requirement. Those who saw the play received it with enthusiasm. Now, after eight months have passed, this production is still remembered by the community. A student was overheard saying after the play, "It made me feel real good inside!"

EFFIE CARLISLE  
Sponsor, Troupe 101

### THE EMPEROR JONES

Webster Groves, Mo., High School

**FEW PLAYS** have received more varied treatments in the manner of staging than has Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*. This powerful drama of a swashbuckling former Pullman porter who turned into a tyrannical ruler lends itself to imaginative productions. Therefore our setting consisted of black curtains, a three-step black riser, and a

#### PUBLISHERS

*The Crown of Thorns*, Baker's Plays, Boston, Mass.

*The Emperor Jones*, Dramatists Play Service, Inc., N. Y. C.

*The Admirable Crichton*, *But Not Goodbye*, Samuel French, Inc., N. Y. C.

**BUT NOT GOODBYE  
THE EMPEROR JONES  
THE CROWN OF THORNS  
THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON**

projection surface, on which colored abstractions in the mood of the particular scene were flashed. The projector was homemade, patterned after the one described by Herbert Hake in the September, 1953, issue of LAGNIAPPE. Eight glass slides made scene changing practically instantaneous, and only short blackouts marked the division of scenes.

Excerpts from lesser known classical works were utilized for mood music, in addition to the never-ending drum beats called for by the play.

Scene two, the "Formless Fears" scene, was expanded into a haunting modern ballet, in which Jones took part. Scene six, the "slave ship" scene, involved so many practical technical difficulties that the scene was changed. Jones was caused to fall asleep and, as in a dream, a Negro woman, backed by a plantation projection, appeared singing a plaintive spiritual.

Lighting played a most important role in the attainment of a proper mood and atmosphere. It was kept in a very low key and highly selective, with only the character or characters prominent at the moment spotlighted.

Pancake or liquid makeup was found to be more practical for full body application than grease paint, as it did not rub off on clothes so easily.

Producing *The Emperor Jones* was a memorable experience for all concerned.

ROBERT GILMORE  
Sponsor, Troupe 191



**The Admirable Crichton**, Troupe 425, Tucson, Ariz., Senior High School, Lloyd E. Roberts, Sponsor.

**THE ADMIRABLE CRICHTON**

Tucson, Ariz., Sr. High School

ROMANCE has been defined as "some one else, some where else, in some other era having a very difficult time"; this statement is true of the castaways in Acts Two and Three of Sir James Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton*. This fine old play abounds in romance, color, action, masterful stage technique, and offers to a large student cast the opportunity of acting in a superior vehicle.

Last January, 1954, as the Dramatic Arts Department of Tucson High School approached the problems of staging the Barrie classic for a March production, this writer decided to take some liberties with the settings described by the author. As my readers are aware, the first act is placed in the upstairs drawing room of Lord Loam's house in Mayfair. This setting was comprised of three large set pieces mounted on casters and played

before a cyclorama of black velour. At stage right was a fireplace in the classic manner surmounted with a Palladian top. Up center was a three by eight foot platform at twenty-four inch elevation fronted with classic balustrade in profile and flanked at either side by a series of three steps; this commanding central unit was masked overhead with a draped valance of old rose velour and ball fringe. The remainder of Act One setting was formed by a large three-fold bay window at left draped in matching velour and fringe.

Act Two, on the desert isle, was simply set with two profile woodwings showing the trunks and fronds of palm trees, together with a thatched hut of Polynesian influence, a practical rock and tree stump. This scene was played in front of our curved plaster sky cyclorama upon which was projected a view of clouds at sunset. This projection was through a transparent photo negative of one of our famous Arizona sunsets photographed in full color from a page of Arizona Highways by Ray Salazar, a Tucson High School student in the photography division of our Graphic Arts Department. The transparent view was mounted between glass slides and projected onto the sky cyclorama through a six inch focal length sciopican objective lens system backed by a two thousand watt incandescent spotlight with plano-convex lens.

Our setting for Act Three departed from Sir James Barrie's conception and was played as an outdoor scene in an area bounded by more elaborate versions of the hut Crichton was building in Act Two. At stage right were two profile huts while at rear center was located a practical stone barbeque-type fireplace flanked by profile sections of stockade of upright logs and planks. At stage left were two more huts (one with practical window opening), the one down left being more pretentious as befitting

(Continued on page 27)



**The Emperor Jones**, Troupe 191, Webster Groves, Mo., High School, Robert K. Gilmore, Sponsor.



# Skipper's Scuttlebutt

APRIL AD LIBITUM

**H**OW BACKWARD can an industry get? This question is answered each year as summer rolls around: top television shows call a halt to another season; the "live" entertainers disappear into vacationland; and those concerned with the filmed series (bless 'em) start making more films — as if we didn't have enough already!

Television manufacturers have now on the market portable sets, which may be carried from room to room, out to the back yard, along to summer camp — anywhere there is an electrical outlet. This portable set would be most welcome for outdoor viewing if only there were good shows to view. For baseball fans there is some consolation, for more night games are scheduled than ever before.

Why must television programs reverse to the mediocre during the summer months? Probably the audience is fewer, but I'll wager the count would be negligible. Granted, vacations are in order, but good substitutes are a dime a dozen. Why must programs deteriorate to old films and re-runs of the winter shows?

Summer shows, as most have been in the past, are not worth the special effort needed to sit indoors on a nice warm evening when one could be out swimming or playing miniature golf. I for one would have no use for a portable television set. This is not stated in deference to the manufacturers. It is a plea, rather, to the big guys — the network bosses and all concerned — to cease this lapse into semi-consciousness during July, August and September. Television is by far the greatest mass media communication yet to be developed. One should expect and get top-notch entertainment all year round — after all, television mechanically has developed greatly in over eight years.

Skipper feels, however, that unless "those in charge" begin to offer us worthwhile programming all through the year, we who like our television both in summer and in winter should let the top

brass have it with both barrels. Even if it means beginning anew, the television industry to reach its greatest potentiality must provide twelve months annually of superb programs, not only for eight or nine months. Sponsors will be available for twelve months — they had better be — for in the long run, the best advertising ever is from satisfied customers — the television audience!

## CHANGING CHANNELS

**NBC-TV** — Producer's Showcase will bring our way on Monday, April 2, Katherine Cornell as Elizabeth Barrett in *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*. Miss Cornell, after refusing many TV offers, chose this classic for her TV debut. We have waited long for better entertainment; Skipper believes this is it!

**CBS-TV** — Tuesday, April 10, is the evening we will see the great Ringling Brothers Circus direct from Madison Square Garden. This is always a treat especially for those of you who do not get a chance to see the circus on the road. Although the TV presentation will offer only an hour of an actual three-hour Big Top production, it usually manages to insert a little bit of everything, which means a good preview of the circus at its best.

**CBS-TV** — Judy Garland returns April 9 to help General Electric Theatre and Ronald Reagan with an electrical escapade. I hope she is cast correctly this

time, as Judy is one of my favorites. I still cannot forget her poorly prepared, poorly costumed spectacular (which it certainly was not!) of last fall.

## COMING YOUR WAY

**BHOWANI JUNCTION**, adventure-drama, Ava Gardner, Stewart Granger. (MGM)

**THE BIRDS AND THE BEES**, comedy-drama, George Gobel, Mitzi Gaynor, David Niven. (Paramount)

**THE BRAVE ONE**, drama, Michael Ray, Joi Lansing. (RKO)

**THE MAN IN THE GRAY FLANNEL SUIT**, drama, Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones, Frederic March. (20th Century-Fox)

**PATTERNS**, drama, Van Heflin, Everett Sloane, Ed Begley, Beatrice Straight. (United Artists)

**WORLD IN MY CORNER**, drama, Audie Murphy, Barbara Rush. (Universal International)

**THE KILLER IS LOOSE**, drama, Joseph Cotton, Rhonda Fleming, Wendell Corey. (United Artists)

**GIANT**, drama, Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, James Dean. (Warner Brothers)

**ALEXANDER THE GREAT**, drama, Claire Bloom, Richard Burton, Frederic March. (United Artists)

**REVOLT OF MAMIE STOVER**, drama, Jane Russell, Joan Leslie, Richard Egan. (20th Century-Fox)

**GABY**, drama, Leslie Caron, John Kerr. (MGM)

**THE EDDIE DUCHIN STORY**, drama, Kim Novak, Tyrone Power. (Columbia)

## BROADWAY LINE-UP

**ALVIN THEATRE** — *No Time for Sergeants*, Andy Griffith. Comedy.

**ANTA THEATRE** — *Middle of the Night*, Edward G. Robinson. Drama.

**BARRYMORE THEATRE** — *The Chalk Garden*, Gladys Cooper. Comedy.

**BELASCO THEATRE** — *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter?*, Henry Morgan, Orson Bean, Jayne Mansfield, Walter Matthau. Comedy.

**BOOTH THEATRE** — *Time Limit*, Arthur Kennedy. Drama.

**BROADHURST THEATRE** — *The Desk Set*, Shirley Booth. Comedy.

**CORONET THEATRE** — *The Great Sebastians*, Lynn Fontanne, Alfred Lunt. Comedy.

**CORT THEATRE** — *Diary of Anne Frank*, Susan Strasberg, Joseph Schildkraut, Gusti Huber. Drama.

**46TH STREET THEATRE** — *Damn Yankees*, Stephen Douglass, Gwen Verdon. Musical.

**ELEN HAYES THEATRE** — *Tiger at the Gates*, Michael Redgrave. Drama.

**HENRY MILLER THEATRE** — *Witness for the Prosecution*, Una O'Connor, Patricia Jessel, Francis L. Sullivan. Mystery.

**LONGACRE THEATRE** — *The Lark*, Julie Harris. Drama.

**LYCEUM THEATRE** — *A Hatful of Rain*, Shelley Winters. Drama.

**MAJESTIC THEATRE** — *Fanny*, Walter Szek, Ezio Pinza. Musical.

**MOROSCO THEATRE** — *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Burl Ives, Barbara Bel Geddes, Mildred Dunnock. Drama.

**MUSIC BOX THEATRE** — *Ponder Heart*, David Wayne. Comedy.

**NATIONAL THEATRE** — *Inherit the Wind*, Paul Muni, Ed Begley. Drama.

**PLAYHOUSE THEATRE** — *Fallen Angels*, Margaret Phillips, Nancy Walker. Comedy.

**PLYMOUTH THEATRE** — *Janus*, Claudette Colbert. Comedy.

**ROYALE THEATRE** — *The Matchmaker*, Ruth Gordon. Comedy.

**ST. JAMES THEATRE** — *The Pajama Game*, Pat Marshall, John Raitt, Helen Gallagher, Eddie Foy, Jr. Musical.

**SHUBERT THEATRE** — *Pipe Dream*, Helen Traubel. Musical.

**WINTER GARDEN THEATRE** — *Bus Stop*, Kim Stanley, Anthony Ross, Elaine Stritch, Dick York. Drama.

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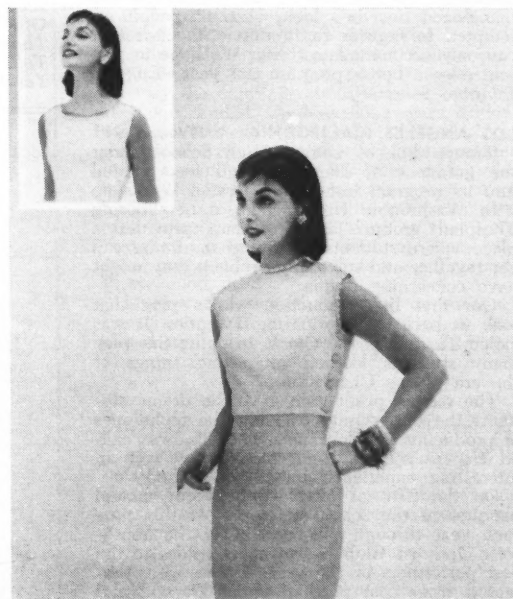
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Troupe 1075, Sikeston, Mo., High School, Martha H. Jones, Sponsor.

# Thespian Chatter

## OCALA, FLORIDA

## Troupe 1380

This year was a very interesting one for Troupe 1380. Since our affiliation with the National Thespian Society, there has been a deeper interest in the dramatics course at our school. Several workshop plays were produced to stimulate interest and to uncover hidden talent.

Our presentation of *The Family Upstairs* afforded an excellent opportunity for each member to contribute something to the production. Each one seemed to have enjoyed carrying out his assigned duties.

*Double Door* was our final production. The cast included our four-star Thespians. They worked diligently and were able to bring to our community an evening of pleasing entertainment. The success of the production was manifested two days later when 65 people attempted to register for a dramatics class that can only accommodate thirty. We hope to present even a better program this year.—Eugenie Johnson, Secretary.

—O—

## LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA Troupe 911

Troupe 911 of Dorsey High School under the guidance of Dan Desmond incorporated into its program last year a Drama Workshop with Washington High School, a neighboring Thespian group. This workshop provides a place where students interested in drama can get together and solve any problem they might have concerning drama.

Our first big production was a play that took us back to the Roaring Twenties. It was called *Turn Back the Clock*. In doing this play many students learned interesting things of the era of the Charleston.

The second production gave the drama students the opportunity to learn the techniques of producing a melodrama. The play was called *He Ain't Done Right by Nell*. It was an interesting experience for all concerned.

On the 27th of May we held our annual banquet in the school cafeteria. At this time each year through the courtesy of the Southwest Optimist Club, we award trophies to the best performers of the year. Scenes were presented from past plays done at Dorsey, and seven new members were initiated into the Thespian Society. As an added attraction Dave Barry, comedian of television and night clubs, and Jimm'y Dodd, a well known song writer, entertained our 150 guests. It was a memora-

ble occasion for all of us.—Gary Mattin, Publicity Director.

—O—

## TIFFIN, OHIO

## Troupe 1070

*Antic Spring* was presented seven different times for local city organizations by Troupe 1070 of Columbian High School during the last school year.

Highlighting the season's program, *The Cat and the Canary* offered a challenge for the staging committee as well as the actors. *The Wizard of Oz* was given in November for the city school children in grades 1-6. *Song of Glory* proved to be an appealing Christmas play.

A one-act program, with an evaluation by Archie Thomas, head of the Heidelberg College Speech Department, included *What Men Live By*, *Alice's Blue Gown*, and *Antic Spring*. Other one-acts presented during the year were *Thanks Awfully*, *Not Quite such a Goose*, *You Too Can Be Charming*, *The Right Answer*, and *Yes Means No*.

## AMBRIDGE, PA.

## Troupe 1032

Troupe 1032 has been very busy this year preparing for the Ninth Regional Dramatic Arts Conference to be held at our high school, April 21. We have worked very hard, in co-sponsorship with Troupe 187, to plan a very interesting program for you. From the time you come to the time to leave it will be a program of tours, workshops, plays, a delicious luncheon, and a special dinner. I hope you will all come and have a really wonderful time with your fellow Thespians.

Among the other activities of our group was the installation of a Thespian Troupe at North Allegheny High School on Tuesday, February 7. We have also appointed a committee to see the commissioners and influential men of Ambridge to discuss a Summer Stock Company. There is an old barn a few miles out of town which can easily be cleaned out in order to put on plays. It is a way of taking care of the many high school and college students who have nothing to do during the summer.

The seniors did a wonderful job this year with the play *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. It got a great response from the audience. The juniors had a fine time working on the play *You Can't Take It with You*. The all school play, which will be shown at our Regional Dramatic Arts Conference, is the comedy by William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*.—Harriet Zervos, Scribe.

Sixteen dramatic club members were initiated into the National Thespian Society at a formal ceremony to which parents and friends were invited.—Elizabeth Campbell, Secretary.

—O—

## WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS

## Troupe 1164

Troupe 1164 is the busiest organization in the Wichita Falls Senior High School. Besides the plays, festivals, and contests listed in our final report, we have many outside performances. Sometime during each school year we appear on almost every TV station and at civic organizations with plays, dramas, programs, and speeches. We are in charge of morning devotions given over the public address system before classes. We are in charge of graduation and baccalaureate and have had an interesting TV spot every other Sunday afternoon.

Our social activities are varied and interesting. We begin each school year with a picnic.



Our Town, Troupe 153, Mirabeau B. Lamar High School, Houston, Texas, Ruth R. Denney, Sponsor.

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At the end, there is success for some, failure for others, but each has learned some lesson of lasting benefit.

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BAKER'S



PLAYS

569 BOYLSTON ST., BOSTON 16, MASS.

This year we had an informal sock hop and box supper. At Christmas we enjoyed the annual Christmas dinner with gifts for all. All new members and new officers are entertained with a picnic at the end of the school year. This year one of our members gave a dinner dance at the Country Club. A reception for dates, parents, and friends is held after each play. We worked hard together so we enjoy "playing" together.—Sandra Landon, Secretary.

—O—  
SCRANTON, PENNSYLVANIA Troupe 1024

A successful year of Thespian activities was culminated with the second annual dinner held at the Europa Lounge at which fifty members were present. Seniors were presented with bouquets and boutonnières. The dinner is becoming the highlight of the Thespians' social calendar, the other important event being the autumn dance—the proceeds of which are used for Thespian membership.

A newly inaugurated program of weekly assemblies kept the Thespians on the jump throughout the year. Members were either participating in the assemblies or acting as stage hands for the other departments of the school. Many Thespians appeared in the weekly TV programs sponsored by the Scranton School District.

The Constitution and By-Laws of the troupe were revised. The troupe started a library of famous plays on records and will add to the collection yearly. Four speech and acting classes were in operation with courses as follows: Beginners' Speech—Speech and Diction; Intermediate Speech—Pantomime and Characterization; Advanced Speech—Speeches for Every Occasion; Thespians—Parliamentary Procedure, History of the Drama.—William Perry, Secretary.

—O—  
ESCANABA, MICHIGAN Troupe 1204

The Scrapbook of 1204 Speaks

I sure collected a lot of material on my pages last year! Troupe 1204 was certainly

busy. My first article concerned election of officers and the presentation of our first play, *Our Town*. It was presented November 23 and 24. From the newspaper articles I glued on my pages about it, I gathered the play was a great success. (I wish I could have seen it too!)

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It seems that the officers of 1204 installed the new Graveraet Troupe, 1463, of Marquette, Michigan, and also presented a one-act play, *Box and Cox*, at a very impressive school assembly. That was indeed very nice!

The Thespians also helped with the hilarious senior class play, *You Can't Take It with You*, presented March 15 and 16. That headline said *Success Scored*. The picture of the cast made it look as if it were fun to present.

Even after two plays the club couldn't be inactive. This time they presented a school assembly talent show on April 1 which was a great deal of fun to see, or so I understand. Anyway the clippings about it were good, and everyone liked it. On May 25, twenty students were initiated into Thespians at a school assembly, and *Box and Cox* was again presented.

The last clippings for last year, which were laboriously pasted on my pages, were about Spring Forensics. Twelve students participated in this, and five of them were in the Spring Forensic Contest, where four of them were rated superior. Those students were Thespians! Pretty good, hey?

I guess this was the end of an extremely busy year, and my still damp pages were closed until next September.—Mary Ellen McMeekan, Scribe.

—O—

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA Troupe 560

As the curtain rose on the year 1954-55, an outstanding presentation of *The Robe* was staged. Long hours of hard work by everyone concerned resulted in the best-accepted play in Victoria High's history.

Act II proved successful also as two plays, *Alexander Proposes* and *The Robe of the Galilean* were entered in the school drama festival. John Gilliland, who portrayed Stephanos, won the Best Actor Award.

Act III centered on Thespian Night, at which time 24 new members were initiated and three "old" members were presented with



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As the curtain descended, honorary memberships were awarded at the annual School's Awards Day, to H. L. Smith, retiring principal, who taught at V. H. S. for 41 years, and to ex-drama coach Miss E. Cameron.—Irene Foot, Secretary.

—O—

#### HAYTI, MISSOURI

#### Troupe 1373

"I don't have enough points to get into Thespians" wailed one unhappy junior this year. His failure to make the grade thus encouraged other underclassmen to start as early as possible to participate in our dramatic program so that they may not be disappointed, but rewarded with Thespian membership.

Our newly installed troupe began its first regular year with an open social meeting at which time our new pledges became very enthusiastic about plans for the year's dramatic program. All of our Thespians participated in one or more of the year's major productions: *Girl Crazy*, *Father Knows Best*, *Come, Let Us Adore Him* (this Christmas program was presented with the music department, in arena style), and an evening of one-act plays. Our major activities also included the production of our contest play, *Birthday of the Infanta*, which won top honors in the district and state meets. We also operated a radio station for six and one-half hours on Saturday last spring. This included all the pre-broadcast work—selling the time, writing the advertising, recording, arranging, and then the actual "on the air" experience.

We have two initiations each year—one a formal banquet for members only, and the other a formal tea for members, parents, and faculty.—Byron Tinsley, President.

—O—

#### INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

#### Troupe 1240

Trips, skits, full-length plays, one-acters, and theatre parties gave Troupe 1240 an active year. We presented *The Rivals*, Norvelle's adaptation of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, and Mr. Barry's *Etchings*. We entered *The Leader of the People* in the Indianapolis High School



Angel Street, Troupe 1010, Pampa, Texas, Sr. High School, Helen Schafer, Sponsor.

Drama Festival; and at Ball State Teachers' College, Schorling Schneider and Carol Frisbie won best acting awards in *The Scheming Lieutenant* and *The Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. All trips were financed by profits from school plays. We traveled almost 300 miles by chartered bus.

The high point of the season was our initiation night when we awarded Honorary Memberships to Joseph Hayes, author of *The Desperate Hours* and an alumnus of our school; his wife, Marrijane, an alumna and co-author with her husband of numerous plays; and Ella Sengenberger, Director of Publications.—Carol Frisbie, Reporter.

—O—

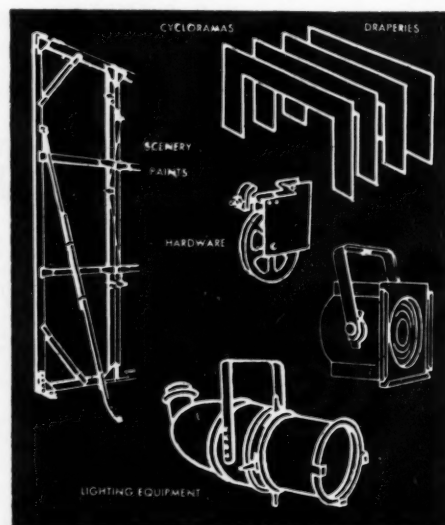
#### FRENCH MOROCCO

#### Troupe 1502

We chose *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* as our major production of the year because French Morocco seemed like the logical setting for a play with so much French. Our audiences, student, military, and lay are all acquainted with the hardships of sea travel and old hotels, and many have been to Paris. All

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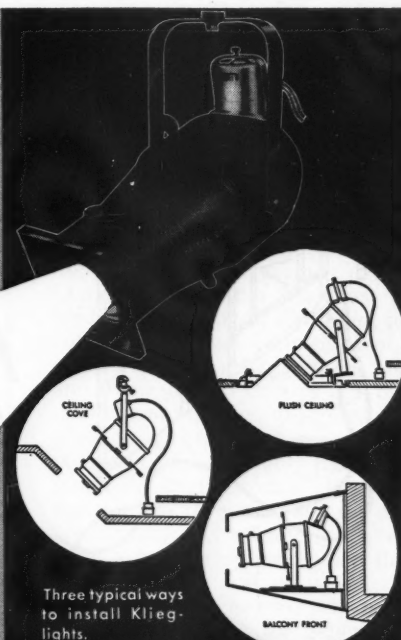
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these associations gave the play meaning in addition to its normal charm and gayety.

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Our production was very well received and appreciated here in French Morocco. The cast thoroughly enjoyed every performance and as a result our dramatic club is now larger.

A command performance of *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* was given after the play had been so well received at the two regular performances. Both the cast and the crew enjoyed working on the play very much. We also gave two one-act plays, *When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet* and *The Alien Star*. We later presented *When Shakespeare's Gentlemen Get Together*, which is the sequel to *When Shakespeare's Ladies Meet*. Even though we are a newly organized troupe, we have enjoyed a most successful and interesting year.—Beth Piper, Treasurer.

—O—

## CROOKSTON, MINNESOTA Troupe 706

The 1954-55 season was a busy one for members of Troupe 706. A *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, a three-act comedy, was the first production of the year. Next came the Christmas play, *An Alien Star*.

Four students were initiated into Thespians following resumption of school after the holidays. On February 1 the local troupe sponsored a trio of one-act plays. They were *Dust of the Road*, a dramatic play; *The Case of the Crushed Petunias*, a satirical drama; and *Aria de Capo*, a harlequinade. From these three plays *Dust of the Road* was selected to represent Crookston in the district one-act play contest where it received an excellent rating.

*Curtain Going Up* was the major spring production. Shortly before the close of the school year 15 students were initiated into the National Thespian Society in a ceremony held for the entire student body. So ended another successful season for Thespian troupe 706.—Elaine Boyer, Secretary.

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## BARTOW, FLORIDA

## Troupe 728

During the year 1954-55 Troupe 728 aided in the production of the Bartow High School's three major dramatic events, the senior class play, junior class play, and glee club operetta. The two plays, which were directed by our sponsor, Charles R. Trumbo, along with the operetta, were widely acclaimed as "best yet" performances.

The members of the troupe, not being content with an exclusive dramatic role, turned carpenter and constructed for the local auditorium a complete, new set of scenery flats that may be used not only for school purposes but for the general public as well.—Jerry L. Whitten, Scribe.

—O—

## ENID, OKLAHOMA

## Troupe 1263

Busy — busy — busy!! This is the way Troupe 1263 spent the entire year. Under the sponsorship of Delyte Poindexter the troupe presented their own two-act play, *Room for One More*, and supplied many members of the casts in *Night of January 16th* (all school play), *We Were Young That Year* (junior class play), and *June Graduate*, (senior class play). The one-act play, *Sugar and Spice*, was given at three speech meets, including the state contest. Thespian Sandy Barris, playing the part of Suzy, was awarded Best Actress award at the Blackwell speech contest and made the all-state play cast at the state meet. Only four girls in the entire state were made members of this cast. Between plays the troupe held a formal initiation for 63 new members. A banquet honoring senior members was held May 5 by the juniors and sophomores. Best Actor and Actress Awards were given for the four plays and the Best Boy and Girl Thespian Awards were presented. New officers were installed at the banquet, and the members of Troupe 1263 left thinking "next year will be busier than ever."—Kay Dailey, Publicity Chairman.



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### DAVENPORT, IOWA

### Troupe 654

"—and a busy year was had by all" might well apply to the Cameo Drama Club of the Immaculate Conception Academy. The first major production of the school year also was the last of the Marian Year—a pageant honoring Mary in her title of Queen of the Universe. This was presented by the junior Cameos. Next on our dramatic calendar was the Annual Memorial Churchill Contest, an interpretive reading contest for the senior students. Close upon the heels of the Churchill Contest came the junior play, a three-act comedy, *We Were Young That Year*. The novel staging of this play was partly responsible for its huge success. The Negro Press was lauded by the sophomore Cameos' verse choir during Book Week. An original St. Patrick's Day show, *A Little Bit O' Heaven*, was presented by the juniors much to our enjoyment.

Our entry in the Iowa City Play Festival, *Boy with a Cart*, by Christopher Fry, won a "Superior Plus" rating. Our seniors presented *Father Knows Best* in April. The sophomores tried out for radio scripts last spring, while the freshmen made their debut in their one-act plays. To top off all our activities, we attended the Catholic Theatre Convention at Notre Dame in June.

So ends a long and happy year!—Reporter.

—O—

### PAINTSVILLE, KENTUCKY

### Troupe 564

We presented a variety show in assembly on November 4 which consisted of humorous monologs, a radio skit, dramatic readings, radio announcer impersonations, and TV take-offs. On January 18 we held our official initiation and installed officers. Three members and our sponsor, Mrs. Robert Montgomery, presented a program of humorous and dramatic readings at a luncheon meeting of the Kiwanis Club, February 28. Next we presented two one-act plays, *Sugar and Spice* and *High Window*, and a Christmas pantomime, *Why the Chimes Rang*.

We then chose the comical teen-age play, *Sugar and Spice*, to represent our school in the Regional Drama Festival that was held February 26 at Pikeville College. The play received a rating of "superior," which entitled us to enter the State Drama Festival at Lexington March 21 and 22. In Lexington we received a rating of "excellent plus." The latest project of our troupe was to send fifteen students to the Regional Speech Festival, March 25-26 at Pikeville College. Six of the fifteen participants received a "superior" rating and the remaining nine received "excellent." The six "superiors" went to Lexington to compete for state honors, April 18, 19, and 20. In conclusion we plan to have quite a few numbers for the annual style show, May 17.—Patsy Rowe, Secretary.

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## TWO "FIRSTS"

(Continued from page 15)

cause it offered a challenge to us (not that other plays such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Aladdin* hadn't). The idea of first high school performance tempted us." It is evident that Troupe 983 and their sponsor met the challenge very successfully; Mr. Beringer reports favorable child-audience response and many generous comments from the adult guests and critics, among whom was Sara Spencer, editor of *The Children's Theatre Press*.

Mr. Beringer reminds producers of new scripts of the obligation to the author to transmit the author's meaning and the occasional difficulty that arises in producing a script for the first time without close author consultation. In Mrs. Hopping's script, he pays especial tribute to the handling of the mystery element, always appealing to children, and to one scene in particular, that involving the magic cape.

In commenting on matters of production in connection with *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, Mr. Beringer says, "We are one of those high schools with a small stage; so, through necessity, we cut the princesses down to our size"—six, which seemed to have no bearing on the effectiveness of the production." For this premiere production drapery sets were used throughout, with incidental columns, trees, chairs, and a baroque-style false proscenium. In order to tie the scenes together, tape-recorded introductions were used with musical background composed of selections from Moussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition," recorded by the Chicago Symphony (RCA). Mr. Beringer notes that the most difficult piece of stage business to manipulate is the swan boat in the last scene, but he says that this is not really difficult, with the use of imagination.

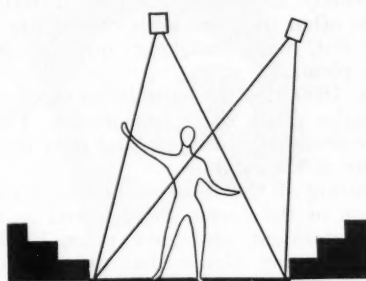
Mr. Beringer concludes his report with the exhortation: "Let me continue my crusade by urging more high school directors to do Children's Theatre and more responsible writers such as Mrs. Hopping to continue their well-aimed work in the Children's Theatre field."

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## DIRECTING

(Continued from page 13)

chorus in the same way that he used stage properties to balance the stage picture. Likewise, the director can divide the large chorus into small units, usually numbering five to seven players in each, which can then be designated by names from the cast or merely by number. In *Knickerbocker Holiday*, the chorus was divided into three groups — the Town Council, the Dutch Maidens, and the Soldiers. In *Finian's Rainbow*, since the entire chorus was comprised of "sharecroppers," the groups were numbered and referred to as Groups 1, 2, or 3. The membership of each group was carefully planned according to sex, physical appearance, and, probably most important, range of singing voice. In this regard the musical director must be consulted. Each group has a leader or "stage manager" who is responsible for the group both on stage and off stage. Thus in arranging the rehearsal schedule and in giving instructions for general blocking during the early stages of rehearsal the director has a convenient method for bringing some degree of order out of what is often a most hectic and confused situation. Later, as may be noted in the illustrations, individual variations can be suggested as the production develops.

Obviously these suggestions in regard to selecting, casting and rehearsing the musical production will serve only to start the hesitant director on his way. If the director does not hesitate, he will find in the musical production according to Mr. Gassner that "theatre is — *theatre*: namely, make-believe, creative exuberance, and a release of energies."

## ADMIRABLE CRICHTON

(Continued from page 19)

Crichton at this stage of events. Over all were seen the palm trunks and fronds described in Act Two. As my readers will have guessed the change from Act Two to Act Three was accomplished mainly by the addition and rearrangement of profile huts, thus eliminating the heavy change from an exterior to an interior as suggested by Mr. Barrie.

It is suggested that for a pictorial representation of a section of our Act Three setting the reader refer to the cover of *Dramatics* for February 1955.

Act Four shifted back to the same setting as used in Act One with the addition of a lion's skin and head draped over the central balustrade, with other momentos of the island placed about the room on mantle and divan.

*The Admirable Crichton* is a great challenge to the artistic effort and ingenious contrivance of director-designer, student actor and technician in the educational theatre, but the results are rewarding to both audience and producing group.

LLOYD E. ROBERTS  
Sponsor, Troupe 425

## THE GAY NINETIES

(Continued from page 11)

orated with many rows of narrow green satin ribbon. This in turn was veiled by a third flounce of crepe plisse, trimmed with narrow striped black velvet ribbon set on in the form of scallops.

To supplement the silk underskirt was the silk lining, often too of silk. Heavy cloth, light woolens, half-woolens, and even washing materials were frequently lined throughout with silk. Ladies wearing a simple woolen dress but lined with silk had no desire to keep the secret to themselves and made a point of rustling with every movement. Stiff taffeta was used, and the entire lining of the skirt was often covered with frills that brushed against the silk underskirt and produced the desired rustling sound.

Fashion became a spendthrift and was lavish of laces, embroidery and beads as well as pleats and flounces. In 1895 a silk dress was made that was worked all over with gold tinsel and imitation pearls; gold Venetian lace insertion was also embroidered with branches of elder set with crystal beads. The hem of the skirt was trimmed with ostrich feathers. Embroidery became so popular that after 1897 even walking-suits and jackets were trimmed with lace.

In 1901 a certain modiste advertised a creation called "A River Bank in Spring." At the hem water was shown by lavish open-work, while above this reeds and other water-plants rose knee-high.

Lace was used lavishly, and gowns that were made entirely of lace were extremely fashionable. Light materials were often trimmed with ribbon run in and out, with smocking, quilting and tiny pleats.

In 1899 gowns entirely covered in spangles made their appearance. They were first made in black, and later in all colors of the rainbow.

During all this time the bodice, a repetition of the corset, disappeared as an outer garment, and gave place to the softly-hanging blouse that did not follow the exact lines of the figure. It had appeared at three different times during the century, and in 1888 and 1889 it differed from the skirt in material and color. The same range of materials was used as for the skirt, but it showed a greater variety of style than did the skirt. The waistline was now round instead of pointed and for many years had a belt that united the upper and lower portions of the dress but left each part separate and distinct of the other. It was characteristic of the blouse to hang loosely and softly from the shoulders. Many soft materials were used: "mouseline-de-soie," Liberty silks, "crepe plisse," chiffon, "crepe de Chine," lace, braid, insertion, embroidery, and beads. Often the blouse was composed of two distinct portions—a jacket-like part, "Figaro" jacket, or bolero, with broad open lapels, over a jabot of some filmy material, often pleated or finely gathered.

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The open lapels were embroidered, and the neck, which was always covered, was surrounded by thick ruchings, cascades of lace, ribbons or bows. Sometimes the over-blouse was left open, hanging loose from the shoulders to within a hand's breadth of the waist.

When the pouched sleeve began to disappear, a pouch appeared in the blouse which for many years hung over the belt in front.

About 1898 the "princess" gown appeared, blouse and skirt being of the same material. It was worn only for full dress.

For some years there had been evidence of a change in lines. It was brought on by the new corset of 1902. Upon this foundation it was possible to build up the new "line" that despised roundness and curves. This new line created one shape for all women, a straight line from the shoulder to the hem of the skirt.

A wide silk sash that made the upper part of the body seem shorter than it was gradually led to the short waist that appeared in Paris in 1906.

From 1890 to 1899 men wore a cutaway or frock coat with high lapels, a cutaway or tail coat for weddings. He wore tight trousers with the cutaway frock coat, and his business suit usually had trousers and coat of the same material. A shirt with a stiffly-starched front, opening at the back, was worn with a formal coat or formal business suit. Some shirts were pleated and had a detachable cuff. The working man usually wore a soft shirt with collar and cuffs attached. The shirt collar was usually left open at the neck.

A man in the Gay Nineties often wore a low-crowned straw hat, sometimes secured by an elastic cord to the lapel of the coat, a top hat varying in height, a curled brim hat, a slouch hat, a bowler or derby hat, or a tam-o'-shanter.

Men of fashion wore pointed toed shoes that came to the ankle, laced or buttoned, and black patent leather shoes with kid or cloth top.

Black woolen hose were worn by most men, but socks with colored stripes were worn by young men.

Here indeed is a period not too far in the past. Although your parents may not recall this period of dress, I am sure your grandparents will remember the gaudy dress of the Gay Nineties. Why don't you ask them for their descriptions? Tucked away in many attic trunks are, I am sure, the dresses of those days of barbershop quartettes, of melodramas, of "After the Ball Is Over."

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## NON-PROFESSIONAL THEATRE

(Continued from page 10)

ties and excellence of production.

Finally, there is the high school theatre, the "grass roots" of American theatre. Here it is that theatre-goers are educated, that future technicians and artists of theatre are stimulated, and that the greatest activity of all takes place. Rare indeed is the high school in the United States that does not have its class play or its senior assembly. Largely peopled by folks lacking in experience, the high school theatre has always made up for its lack of professionalism with its vitality, its sincere dedication to a "good show," and its willingness to try anything once. It would be grossly unfair to single out a few high schools as examples, but one has only to have attended a production at Webster Groves, Missouri, to realize the great potential of the secondary school. For the participants of play production in the secondary school, there is the rich reward of artistic creation, the knowledge of having performed well before an audience, and the invaluable results in personality growth, knowledge of literature, and getting along with others. For the audience, the play-going experience can be rewarding. For nothing is quite as stimulating as witnessing a well-done high school play.

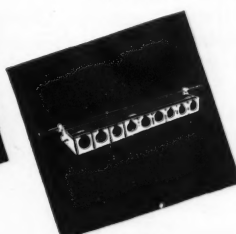
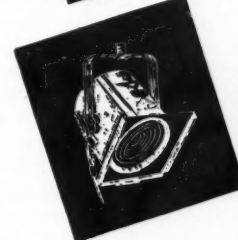
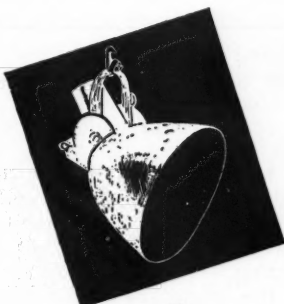
It would be wonderful to close this installment, dealing as it does with non-professional theatre, on such a high note of praise. Unfortunately, any such historical appraisal reveals flaws and cracks in the "silver lining."

Perhaps the most obvious criticism which can be made of non-professional theatre in the United States today is the low level of its play selection. Too many community and educational theatres are content with the leftovers of Broadway. Despite their avowed dedication to civic and liberal arts goals, they are in reality frightened by their own box offices and retreat from new playwrights as from a plague. Until a play has been successfully produced in the professional theatre, either Broadway or Hollywood, it is seldom tried out by either the great or the small theatre groups.

At another level, criticism may be levelled at the fear with which these theatres view the great heritage of theatrical literature. Too many college theatres leave Shakespeare to the English professors, Sophocles to the classics department, Moliere to their French colleagues, and so on. The great drama literature is the heritage of the stage and not of some academic department; Shakespeare, for example, wrote plays. The highest tribute we can pay the greatest of English poets is to produce his plays on the stage today for living audiences to thrill to. All too frequently, however, the college theatre is merely a dim, and inadequate, imitation of Broadway. While the great dramas of the past gather historic dust in the libraries, the "popular" Broadway play is done to death everywhere.



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At the high school level the criticism can be still more severe. After a respectable beginning in institutions of public education, wherein great dramas were produced, the high school theatre has largely sunk to the level of what is called "the high school comedy." One need only peruse the listing in this magazine of the most produced plays each year in member schools to realize how monotonous the cavalcade of such drama is. Moreover, most of these "popular" plays have little or no literary or theatrical value. They are largely a string of "gags" built on a phony adolescent basis, which assumes that educational theatre at the secondary school level is immature physically and intellectually and that only "the light and the sweet" are fitting for high school dramatic talents and audiences. Box office returns may indeed swell with such productions, but history

indicates that no theatre, professional or non-professional, has survived on such a round-robin diet of saccabrine, slush, and idiocy. The flaw is not in the playwrights and publishers of these plays, for they would gladly publish and write finer dramas. The flaw lies, unfortunately, with inadequately trained and/or disinterested directors and performers who are more fascinated by their own glory in art than with the art itself.

Whether or not the non-professional theatre survives (and there is serious questioning as to whether the present-day form of this drama should) rests with the students and their teachers in high schools today. The level of all of the theatre arts depends on the level that professionals and theatre-goers demand in the future. If the best secondary schools can do is the "high school comedy," then the theatre is indeed in sad shape.



## SHAKESPEARE

(Continued from page 8)

Having decided that the *Comedy* was the play to do, I found the procedure very like my grandmother's recipe for rabbit pie—first catch a rabbit. I confidently thumbed through my play catalogues, assuming that I could easily find a nice, inexpensive acting edition. To my surprise I found that only Samuel French lists any such edition. Their Globe edition proved unsatisfactory for my purposes since the play was cut to about thirty minutes; some of the best comedy situations were eliminated; and little or nothing was done to clarify ambiguous lines, to simplify setting, or to amplify stage directions. To my further surprise I found there is not any other edition of the play published by any company listed in the standard reference catalogues. I borrowed an ancient copy of the play from the city library and made my own acting edition prompt book. If you are one who can "burn up" a typewriter, your best bet is probably to mimeograph scripts for your company. Since I am not even an expert "hunter and pecker," I finally ran down a dollar edition of all the comedies of Shakespeare in one volume. About the only good things I can say about this edition are that it is inexpensive and that the lines are all included. The margins are stingy, the print so small it calls for one's strongest reading glasses, and the paper so thin most pencilled insertions resulted in holes of varying size.

After I completed my prompt book and the actors' play books arrived, I told the story of the play to the members of the speech classes and issued typed excerpts for memorizing to those interested in trying out. The cast was selected in tryout style by fellow students, a faculty committee, and me. I feel that the director must reserve the right to make the final decisions on casting since his is the final responsibility for the success or failure of the production, but that things get off to a better start if both students and faculty members are asked to voice an opinion. If the tryouts are reasonably thorough, I find there is usually marked agreement in the selection of actors.

The new chosen cast and I gathered around a long table, and the actors marked their scripts as I read from my prompt book. I must admit that this was one of the low moments of the entire project. The work itself was tedious; the small print and blank verse lines seemed alien and a bit frightening. My young stage hopefuls are a courteous and considerate group and manfully attempted to veil their distrust of my play selection, but it was obvious that at this point they were less than enthusiastic. One of the really rewarding experiences of doing the *Comedy* was to see a warm, human, uproariously funny, live production develop from this rather inauspicious beginning.

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I considered that a necessary first step in planning for the production was to design a single set in which all the necessary action could logically occur. I preferred rather realistic staging, and since our high school auditorium possesses neither the flexibility of a Broadway revolving stage or the freedom of Shakespeare's stage where time and place of action were limited only by the bounds of the spectator's imagination, it was not feasible to leap from the sea coast of Ephesus to the Duke's court to the house of Adriana. The solution to the problem of a single set was really quite simple and proved to be entirely practical and satisfactory. I am indebted to Dr. Marion Galloway for the basic idea for my set which I derived from one of her productions in the University of Alabama Theatre. The setting is a square in the city of Ephesus in the fifteenth century. Down stage right is the home of Antipholus of Ephesus. For this house our ingenious shop boys built a sturdy balcony which extended about four feet into the acting area. Beneath the balcony an iron grilled doorway led into the lower floor of the house. To save space, add color and facilitate entrances and exits, we hung a dark red velvet drape over the balcony exit rather than using a traditional door. The front and down stage walls of the house were constructed of flaps we already had. Upstage a board walk, approximately four feet wide and eighteen inches high, extended across the width of the stage and into the wings left and right. The lumber for this walk was a rather expensive item. We were able to use one platform we had and part scrap lumber from the shop to effect some economy. Back of the board walk and extending the width of the stage were the shops of the merchants of the city of Ephesus. The only practical doors needed in this area are one leading into the goldsmith's shop and one into the Porpentine, the inn at which the disgruntled Antipholus of Ephesus dines with the Courtesan. The three golden balls of the money lender's guild hung over the goldsmith's door, and a pictured bottle of wine marked the entrance to the Por-

pentine. Down stage left was the entrance to the abbey. A stained glass window and a gilded cross above the arched entrance identified the building. A low porch with one step fronted the abbey. No covering was used over the entrance and the off stage effect of a vaulted hallway gave a nice suggestion of depth and perspective. Tall tree flats were placed between the house down right and the abbey down left and the board walk upstage to mask the wings and to further suggest an exterior setting. Black iron grill work (thin strips of wood painted black) surrounded the balcony, and very low grill work bordered the boardwalk. The interior masking to Adriana's house entrance was painted a canary yellow, and a deep blue silk scarf hung across the balcony railing. These colors were repeated in the stained glass window (crepe paper pasted over a cut out in construction board and softly lighted from behind). All flats were painted a warm, light gray against which the black grill work, the spots of color at exits and window, and the glamorous Renaissance costumes showed up excellently. We hung a sky drop back of the upstage shops, but if the flats are tall this is unnecessary. All in all this was the most satisfying set I have ever worked with. The various stage levels gave infinite variety and interest to stage pictures, and the large and uncluttered acting area permitted handling of the large cast without bunching or crowding. (The only piece of furniture on stage is a bench on the boardwalk right center.)

Lest some fellow director accuse me of overstatement, let me hasten to add that this set was no exception to my experience of years' standing that somewhere along the way in the building of all sets you wonder how on earth you ever thought such an idea would work and you'd cheerfully throw all flats, lash line and props out of the stage door and go jump into the nearest large body of water. Such morbid thoughts arose during the construction of the *Comedy* set when we found just how sturdily a balcony must be braced to hold three actors at one time and not to shake the adjoining flats like a minor hurricane

when the actors mount the ladder to make their entrances. Another low moment was when I went in to survey the set by the unflattering light of an early Monday morning. All of the gray and black paint was on but none of the spots of color and no actors were on stage. I thought, "The audience will go into mourning when the curtain rises; this is supposed to be a comedy and here I've designed a set that looks like nothing so much as something for one of O'Neill's tragedies." Fortunately for all directors there is no turning back when a play has reached such a point in its birth struggles. If there were, I doubt that any play would ever see its culmination. All you can do is trust your initial judgment and call in a few trusted friends and say, "Lend a thought or a hand." If the groundwork of your planning has been thorough, you are basically right and a little touch here and a nail and a brace there will solve your apparently insoluble problems.

One of the truly delightful things about the *Comedy* is the experience it offers costume committees. Sketches in books on period costumes, ideas furnished by recent movies, the lovely and inexpensive synthetic fabrics and shiny trimmings available made the costuming a pleasurable task. It is our custom to order eight or ten costumes for the leads from a really good costume house. The cost prohibits getting more. I think it would be unwise anyway, because nothing builds interest like actually having had a part in creating a play. One problem which we chewed at for quite a while was how to make the tights for the men. The answer was so obvious we almost overlooked it—just dye long handles the right color. Be sure they are a tight fit and tie the bottoms of the legs under the feet so there won't be any wrinkling. The question of shoes was solved when the Home Economics teacher designed a pattern for crotaws, the soft, flat shoes worn in the period. For our dressy men we attached the turned up toes of the crotaws to the knee by golden chains. The girls never looked more beautiful than in the sweeping skirts, tight low cut bodices and elaborate headdresses of the period. And what high school boy is not a dashing adventurer when he has yards of cape to swirl about and a sword to draw?

The problem of editing the script seemed to me to consist of combining the five acts and many scenes into three acts with continuity of action; to cut long speeches, ambiguous words and dated humor; and to rewrite many lines to clarify the meaning for a modern audience. I was of course careful to observe the meter and the rhyme scheme where one is used. I attempted to keep constantly in mind that my primary objective was adequate, unimpeded flow of thought and action. I checked my lines and stage business against this criteria:

can every individual effortlessly follow the story the actors are telling? The first scene of the play posed the greatest difficulty. It is essential that much of the Duke and Aegeon's long dialogue be retained since it tells what has gone before and points to what is to follow. Even after drastic cutting these remained the longest speeches in the play. As a help in holding the audience's interest and in underlining important lines, I used colorful, rather elaborate and changing stage pictures in this opening scene. I gave Aegeon importance by placing him and the goaler alone center stage left. The Duke, ladies and gentlemen of his Court, the guardsmen and herald were upstage on the boardwalk. Aegeon's speeches were carefully broken up with crosses and changes of stage level. At no point in the play between this first scene and the entrance of Aemellia, the Abbess, in the third act is there any difficulty in pacing the action and pointing the meaning.

The young actors found great pleasure and freedom in building their characters. The ever present danger among amateurs of over acting is reduced to a minimum in the *Comedy*. For example, the twin slaves can ham it up to their hearts' content. We chose to interpret these important characters in the mood of the traditional court jester, slyly wise and using their masters more than they themselves are used. We emphasized the romantic angle by playing up the love

scenes between Antipholus and Adriana as forcefully as possible. Twice she is almost in his arms while still believing him to be her brother-in-law. Once her own conscience and again another actor interrupt the embrace.

If any director fears difficulty in casting the two pair of identical twins, I should like to point out the fact that at no time until immediately prior to the denouement is either of the pairs of twins on stage at the same time. Some care of course must be taken to avoid too much difference in voice quality or in general build. If this factor is observed, identical costumes and careful makeup create the desired illusion. Actually our twins were quite dissimilar in natural facial contour and coloring, but their identity back of the footlights was convincing.

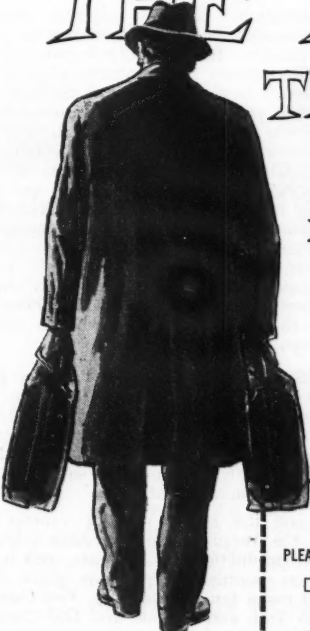
The play can constitute a heart warming project for your entire speech department for several months. There is a place for every student to work regardless of his interests. The ones with an artistic touch may design armor or headdresses of halberds, after the necessary research of course to discover just what a halberd is anyway. The mechanically inclined men can build, and best of all a very large number of those who wish to act can act.

My students and I learned, and learned happily, from the *Comedy*. The audience loved every minute of it, and so I say look to Shakespeare for fun.

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**DARLING GIRL** by Kate Kendall, 3-act drama; Dramatists Play Service; 4M, 10W. Settings: the bedroom of a girls' dormitory and two inserts: an anteroom of the school and a railway station corner. Royalty: on application.

This small New England girls' school is filled with the usual student types: the introverted scholar, the egocentric rebel, the weak-kneed follower, and so on. Nevertheless, the characterization is good and the dialogue is fast-moving and authentic. An excellent touch of reality is that the rebel is not suddenly reformed in a last-minute conversion but remains as experience often proves, a rebel to the bitter end; her wavering satellite is, quite logically, saved before it is too late. Settings are not too difficult, since the two inserts may be quite simply done with a few book-flats. A group hunting a play that is not too far from the beaten track and yet that is well worth the time it takes to produce may find this script just the kind they have in mind.

**MILLION-DOLLAR MAYBE** by Hal Kesler. 3-act comedy; Row Peterson; 7M, 8W, and 3 dogs. Setting: an old-fashioned living room. Royalty: on application.

Written down in bare outline form, this plot may sound almost too ridiculous to warrant consideration; but, as adroitly developed by the author, such is not really the case. A fortune

stand. In the end Matthew has lost the love of his wife but gained the greater love of Jesus. The characterizations are full and well motivated, although the dialogue, in an effort to reproduce ancient speech patterns, seems a bit stilted at times. The use of a few contractions and the omission of a few "literary" adjectives, for example, will very easily produce a more fluid, natural speech cadence. This play should answer the need of many a religious group that aspires to something more ambitious than the customary one-act play.

**THE LADY CHOOSES** by William McCleery. 3-act drama; French; 4M, 7W. Setting: library of a country mansion in upper New York. Royalty: \$35.00.

Played with success by Helen Hayes on TV and Faye Emerson in summer stock, this play concerns the sometimes-humorous, sometimes-serious difficulties encountered by a sincere woman who is duped into becoming a political pawn for a shady assortment of wealthy backers. She is interested in being a good citizen, of course, but her decision to run for Congress is largely brought about by her husband's apparent lack of faith in her and by her backers' deception in organizing a fake "draft" movement. In the end she brings things to rights again but discovers that her husband has now begun to believe that she must get to Congress on her true merits. Though the plot, characterization, and dialogue are adult, a good

roles are middle-aged or elderly, youngsters may have some extra difficulty in playing them; but they certainly will provide any young thespian with an assignment he can sink his teeth into.

**MAN OF SEVENTEEN** by Robert St. Clair. 3-act comedy; Northwestern Press; 6M, 6W. Setting: dining room of a family of moderate means. Royalty: \$25.00.

Comedies of many families who create their own crises through their own eccentricities continue to pour forth with amazing regularity, but this one seems to have an aura of reality that many others sadly lack. The Thatchers are types, as much as most of us are types, but they are also individuals who usually sound very much like some family down the street. There is author manipulation of the plot, but it is done so deftly that one is not bothered by it. There is a straining of plausibility at times, but the touches of genuine honesty and emotion more than compensate. A director who will take his cast beneath the more obvious surface characteristics of these people will find a great deal to work with. For example, father, at first glance, appears to be little more than a boor with appallingly bad manners; but the actor who plays him right will produce a father who is not too different from many who are burdened with family and business problems that seem momentarily overwhelming and inspire many remarks that are not meant as they sound—and, what's more, that are not taken too seriously by anybody who knows the speaker.

**MEET ME AT THE PROM** by James Reach. 3-act drama; Baker; 6M, 10W. Setting: the "for seniors only" room at the rear of the Malt Shop. Royalty: \$10.00.

The previous comment applies to this play too: plays about high-school crises roll from the presses at a distressing rate and virtually all contain the same ingredients: student jealousies and misunderstandings, contests for positions of popularity, puppy love affairs, poor scholars versus irresponsible rich piddlers, the big game or dance or play, discoveries of stolen funds or other property, and so *ad infinitum*. This play, like most of its competitors, contains virtually all these same ingredients, but with some gratifying differences. These young people are for the most part real people, in spite of their frequent lapses into types. Their dialogue is natural and easy. The motivations of their all-too-familiar scenes have enough depth and reality so that they ring true. For example, discovery of first love is treated with delicacy and dignity, merely suggesting the future outcome when maturity fans the fire that can be little more than a beginning at their present stage of youthful development. Like the previous play, however, this one too could be so easily played at the surface level if the director is not especially careful to dig for the something deeper that is there.

**LATE ARRIVAL** by Charles Oxtan. 3-act drama; French; 3M, 6W. Setting: a living room. Royalty: \$25.00.

Many groups will not be able to do this play because their communities will object to its subject matter: the impact on a family, especially a teen-aged daughter, of an unexpected pregnancy when father and mother are both in their mid-forties. Although the daughter's embarrassment is weakly motivated by her hero-worship of a freak bookworm (why do so many scholarly students in plays have to be freaks?), her necessary emotional adjustment to the unexpected situation is quite logical and understandable. It is a perfectly natural situation that may well be explored on the stage, though many non-thinking people may object to the topic without stopping to consider the fine conclusions that are drawn. They will probably also frown at the frank discussions of childbirth, although the dialogue is handled with the utmost good taste. All credit should go to the publisher who gives us this kind of challenging script and to the group that produces it with the dignity it deserves.

## BRIEF VIEWS

By WILLARD FRIEDERICH

left by an irascible old millionaire to his pet dog is contested by, among others, several people who insist that, if a dog can inherit a fortune like a person, he also has a responsibility to his offspring and companion in the same way that a human being does. There is a great deal of hilarious business involving a student lawyer who draws up a succession of contracts so that the suspicious contestants cannot double-cross each other. Characterization is interesting and considerably more than the caricature which this kind of plot often calls forth. For merely an evening of frothy nonsense, this play will more than suffice.

**AH, YESTERDAY!** by James Reach. 3-act comedy; French; 5M, 7W. Setting: a summer cottage dining-living room. Royalty: \$10.00.

In Prologue and Epilogue we meet the family of Martin Hall, who has brought his wife and two children back to his father's old summer home for the first time in many years. The familiar surroundings impel him to nostalgic reminiscence, and he recreates (in flashback) for his youngsters the crisis of his life when, at the age of twenty, he decided to marry their mother—more by accident than design! The story itself is engrossing, but the chief charm of the play lies in the recreation of that delightfully wacky, optimistic decade of the "roaring twenties" and its comparison with the obviously so-much-more-intelligent fifties. Roles and dialogue are good, and the problem of costumes and properties should be a fascinating project for any troupe interested in something different. This is one play, perhaps, that parents with long memories will enjoy working on as much as their children.

**PUBLICAN AND SINNER** by L. M. Hollinshead. 2-act religious drama; Baker; 3M, 5W, 2 children. Settings: a courtyard and a room in Jerusalem. Royalty: \$5.00.

This is the story of Matthew, the "publican and sinner" whom Jesus called from his job as tax collector to follow Him. The trials of the man and his family involve the social ostracism that results, first, from his working for the Romans against his own people and, then, from his being connected with the suspicious stranger whom the Jews cannot under-

stand. In the end Matthew has lost the love of his wife but gained the greater love of Jesus. The characterizations are full and well motivated, although the dialogue, in an effort to reproduce ancient speech patterns, seems a bit stilted at times. The use of a few contractions and the omission of a few "literary" adjectives, for example, will very easily produce a more fluid, natural speech cadence. This play should answer the need of many a religious group that aspires to something more ambitious than the customary one-act play.

**PHANTOM OF THE HIGH SCHOOL** by Anne Martens. 3-act mystery; Dramatic Pub. Co.; 8M, 10W. Setting: library-conference room of a midwest high school. Royalty: \$10.00.

A somewhat different mystery comedy is fairly unusual, but this play seems to meet the requirements. Its high school cast and setting is as uncommon in a mystery play as is the fact that it is played in broad daylight instead of at the proverbial stroke of midnight. The motivation that prompts the mysterious "phantom's" crimes is the centennial celebration of Benson City and the unknown facts about some of the city's early founders which are brought to light by the research that has gone into the production of the celebration's pageant. The characters include a typical cross-section of students, teachers, and townspeople, but they are almost all drawn with plausibility and speak with pert and natural animation. There is little doubt that both cast and audience will enjoy this evening of entertainment.

**THE SOLID GOLD CADILLAC** by Howard Teichmann and George Kaufman. 3-act farce; Dramatists Play Service; 12M, 6W (many of them bit roles). Settings: four different business offices, all of which could be done with a minimum of suggested pieces. Royalty: on application.

At last the recent starring vehicle of the inimitable Josephine Hull has been released for general production by amateurs, and it should prove as popular as previous plays she has helped make famous: *Harvey*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *Arsenic and Old Lace*. Like all of those, her last venture concerns a simple but shrewd, funny but sincere old gal who gets herself into a situation way beyond her depths but muddles through somehow until, as usual, she comes out on top. Her routing of the evil symbols of heartless big business will appeal to everyone who enjoys seeing the "common man" defeat the power of wealth—and that includes just about everybody who isn't a millionaire. Since the majority of the leading



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"A ROLLYING COMEDY"—THE NEW YORK TIMES



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A RARE SORT OF COMEDY—While especially designed to delight a high school cast and audience, distinguished reviewers have acclaimed the freshness and wit of the "Maudie" material. *The Ladies Home Journal* speaks of its "irresistible magnetism." *The New York Times* sums up with "The amorous experiments, triumphs, and misadventures of the sub-deb heroine are unfailingly diverting." It is seldom that light-hearted (sometimes hilarious) writing about young people achieves such substantial critical backing.

**STORY** "You'd think parents would get over this idea that the age of consent means theirs," wails Maudie, for her parents have suddenly decided to cool off her romance with Davy. This romance has lasted since a childhood snowball fight right up to the last Senior dance at high school. And now, Mother and Father have suddenly started to worry—now, with the last summer about to start (for Davy's off to college in the fall!). As a first step Father has taken a cottage for the summer located a good five hundred miles from Davy. "We don't want you to mistake a passing enthusiasm for something more lasting," soothes Mother, adding something about the value of seeing new faces. However, Maudie is struck by a horrible thought: Perhaps Davy will notice a few new faces, too! Some nerve-wracking rumors reach her, and in desperation Maudie decides she must *do something!* Her plan for counter-attack is to throw herself at some very objectionable male, with the hope that her parents will soon be on their knees, pleading with her to go back to Davy. That's the plan, but there are some serious drawbacks. This summer resort doesn't seem to have *any* men in it. Then, too, there are so many attractive yet

languishing girls that the competition, even for an objectionable male, would be pretty grim. "You'd think somebody'd have a brother," cries Maudie. But the shortage doesn't stop her. She discovers a handsome though hermit-like writer in a cottage on the hill. He's sufficiently older to be objectionable, and Maudie launches her plan (and herself) at the writer's head. Her disturbed parents are reacting beautifully, but right at the height of this pretended romance, in walks Davy! Davy has hitchhiked the five hundred miles to see her—and *this* is what he finds! "It was all for *you!*" pleads Maudie, but her explanation falls as flat with the bitterly sarcastic Davy as it does with her parents. And Davy finds himself in a marvelous position to retaliate, for he is the *only* eligible male in the area! This delightful comedy combines some uproarious complications with the natural concern of a girl's parents, and a fine and genuine affection between two young people. In the midst of all the laughter, your audience may find some sensible answers to some important questions about young people.

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